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INFORMAL ECONOMY PARTICIPATION OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN CANADA

BY

©

AYSE NUR ONCU

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ABSTRACT

This study examines immigrant women working in the informal economy, which has been neglected in previous research. The focus of the study addresses such questions as: Who are the immigrant women working informally? What are their reasons for informal work? What are their working conditions?

The data consists of twenty in-depth interviews with immigrant women who informally work as baby-sitters, home-based seamstresses, domestic cleaners and leather apparel industry workers. The findings of this study illustrates that structural factors (e.g., labour market segmentation, social networks in the society) together with individual factors (e.g., socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, immigration status) push or pull immigrant women into the informal economy. Although there is little difference in the jobs performed by immigrant women working in either the formal or the informal economy, immigrant women in the informal economy must endure more exploitative working conditions. However, at the same time, it is informal economy which provides benefits such as tax-free income, flexibility and being home-based in some cases (especially for women with dependant children).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Labour force participation of immigrant women was a neglected issue until the 1970s, as female immigrants have frequently been stereotyped as dependent wives and mothers. In the 1970s as the number of immigrant women in the labour force greatly increased internationally, this neglect began to be rectified. Today a considerable body of literature documents the socio-economic characteristics, labour force participation and employment problems of immigrant women.

In general, immigrants in Canada can be referred to as people who were born and raised in another country and came to Canada in order to live and work. Estable (1986) points out that one out of five Canadians alive today was born outside this country. If we consider half of this population as women, there are approximately two million immigrant women living in Canada.

Most immigrant women enter Canada under the "family class" or "assisted relative" classification[1] (53% over the period of 1980-1986). They are sponsored by a close relative (frequently their husband), and therefore are considered to be "dependent" family members who are not destined for the Canadian labour market (Ng & Estable, 1987:30). However, despite this popular conception and official expectation, most immigrant women join the paid labour force due to financial necessity (Ng & Ramirez, 1981) and they occupy an important place in the Canadian economy. With a labour force participation rate of 58% immigrant women make up 19% of the whole female labour force in Canada (Seward & Tremblay, 1989:33).

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[1] Immigrants are admitted to Canada in three main categories: "independent class", "family class" and "conventional refugees and designated classes". These classes reflect the economic, social and humanitarian objectives of immigration policy. Immigrants in the "independent class" category are admitted on the basis of accumulating a number of points from a range of factors including education, skills, experience and occupation, knowledge of language and arranged employment. In the

Studies on immigrant women in Canada show that they are concentrated in the upper and lower echelons of the occupational hierarchy (Arnopoulos, 1979; Boyd, 1984). They are either concentrated in high-skill professional jobs or in "job-ghettos". Managerial, administrative and professional jobs are often occupied by women who have a British or American origin.2 In fact, these women are

---

"family class", Canadian citizens and permanent residents aged 18 and over living in Canada have the right to sponsor the applications of specified close relatives who wish to come to Canada. Finally, the "conventional refugees and designated classes" category admits immigrants who left their countries by the reason of well-founded fear of prosecution for reasons of race, religion, political opinion, membership of a social group etc.

2 In 1981 while 38% of the U.S.-born and 28% of the U.K.-born women held managerial and administrative occupations or occupations in social and physical sciences, teaching, medicine and health, artistic and literary categories, 8.8% of southern European-born and 24% of Asian-born women held the same occupations (Boyd, 1988:327).

rarely considered as "immigrants" because they speak fluent English and have educational backgrounds which are recognized and highly regarded in Canada.

The popular concept of "immigrant women" refers to those women who come from southern and eastern European, Asian and other developing countries (usually women of colour) and who do not speak fluent English (Ng and Ramirez, 1981; Ng, 1988).3 More than any other group of women, they face barriers when entering the labour market and discriminatory employment practices (Estable, 1986). Like their Canadian counterparts almost all immigrant women experience sex-segregation in occupations, renumeration and benefits. Furthermore, they work in traditionally "female" jobs in the service and manufacturing industries. However, immigrant women, especially the recent immigrants and those who come from developing countries, introduce another layer of segmentation by occupying a subordinate position within these female jobs (Phizacklea, 1983:104-105). Besides sex-segregation, most of these women also experience racial and ethnic segregation which channels them into the lower echelons of the labour market. These women who have the "double disadvantage" of being both female and immigrant often work in marginal jobs which are not wanted by

---

3 This study will focus on this group of immigrant women as the respondents in our sample fall into this category.

Canadian-born women (Ng & Ramirez, 1981).4

Previous work experience and education of immigrant women who come from less-developed countries usually are not recognized by Canadian employers. Even those women who worked in professional and skilled technical occupations in their home countries have to take lower positions because of this lack of recognition of their qualifications and credentials by the Canadian government and employers (Ng & Ramirez, 1981). Women with professional degrees and considerable expertise in their fields are generally denied the opportunity to work until they pass the examinations designed to limit the intake of foreign graduates into Canadian professions (Ng & Estable, 1987:31).

Lack of knowledge of French or English is an important factor steering these women towards employment in the lower echelons of manufacturing industry (textile, garment and the like) and service industry (hotels, restaurants, cleaning and janitorial services, and food processing) where knowledge of English or French is not essential (Ng & Estable, 1987; Boyd, 1988). For the same reason, many of these immigrant women are also recruited into private domestic and janitorial services for members of the affluent class (i.e., doctors, lawyers, managers) (Ng & Estable

---

4More than half of the southern European women are employed in service, processing, fabricating and assembling occupations, compared to 37% of the Asian-born, and 17% of the U.S- and U.K.-born women (Boyd, 1988:328).

1987). These jobs pay low wages, have low status and are generally unprotected by labour legislation (with the exception of most jobs in the textile and garment industry). Lack of knowledge of the dominant language also reduces the unionization potential of immigrant women. Because of the language barriers, which makes union organizing more difficult, most women are not asked to join unions for protection and consequently, employers are more likely to take advantage of their lack of language skills and ignorance of legal rights by paying them less then minimum wage (Gannage, 1986:176). In fact, most of the immigrant women are unaware of the existence of the minimum wage and employment standards legislations. Even if they are aware, they are afraid to complain because of the fear of being fired. For such women, working for low wages under bad conditions is preferable to unemployment.

Most immigrant women find their jobs through friends, relatives or acquaintances (Anderson, 1974). These networks of contacts usually lead them into ethnic "job-ghettos" where they have very little opportunity for advancement. Besides, these job ghettos become "language ghettos" as well. Once they get into one of these, they usually cannot leave it because they cannot learn English in these jobs. Many immigrant women have difficulty acquiring an official language (English or French) even after many years of participation in the Canadian labour market (Ng & Estable, 1987:31).

Although there is considerable research on the labour force participation of immigrant women in Canada today, the majority of these studies only address immigrant women's working conditions, work experiences, and problems in relation to their formal wage employment. Much less attention, so far, has been directed to the study of immigrant women working informally.

Informal work in this study is defined as all the exchanges and production that cannot be recorded and regulated by the institutions of the society (Fernandez-Kelly & Garcia, 1989). Several studies (Johnson & Johnson, 1982; Phizacklea, 1983; Ng & Estable, 1987; Lie, 1988) acknowledge that immigrant women also work informally, but no study explains in-depth the reasons for informal work and the work experiences of these women. Johnson and Johnson's (1982) study on industrial homeworking is probably the only published study which directly focuses on immigrant women's informal work in Canada. Johnson and Johnson attempt to explore the working conditions and work experiences of industrial homeworkers, but not within the context of informal work. Instead, informality in their study appears as a work arrangement in industrial homesewing. Thus, there is very little known about the motivations and experiences of immigrant women who work informally in Canada.

In fact, there is very little known about work perceptions and work experiences of informal workers in general (Jenkins & Harding, 1989). Studies done on the informal economy so far attempt to quantify the informal economy in monetary terms by measuring the tax loss or try to estimate the size of the informal labour (Tanzi, 1980; Ferman & Brendt, 1980; Fiege, 1981; Materra, 1985) or study the informal economy from the point of view of household consumption and production (Pahl, 1980; 1984). Clearly, there is more need for studies that document informal workers' attitudes towards this kind of work and their work activities (Jenkins and Harding, 1989).

By exploring the reasons for informal work and the working conditions of immigrant women in Canada, this thesis contributes both to a better understanding of informal economy and of immigrant women's work. The main research questions addressed in the study are: (a) Who are these immigrant women who work informally? What are their individual characteristics? (b) Why do they work informally? What are the factors that pull or push these women into informal economy? Are these women pushed into the informal economy because of the barriers and problems they face in the formal economy? (c) What are their informal work experiences?

A labour market segmentation perspective, second generation segmentation model, developed by Jill Rubery, Frank Wilkinson and Roger Tarling (1981; 1984) provides the theoretical framework of this study. We use the second generation segmentation model because it provides a multi-causal explanation of segmentation in the labour market. Instead of focusing either on structural or individual factors, second generation segmentation theory stresses the importance of both. Furthermore, it also emphasizes the role of the state in explaining the origins of segmentation and the creation and maintanence of cheap labour in the secondary labour market. This model gives a better understanding of the subordinate position of immigrant women in the labour market. However, this study does not aim to test the second generation segmentation model; rather it aims to build on the segmentation perspective by incorporating the concept of informal economy. Second generation segmentation theory does not address the emergence and growth of the informal economy. However, the framework it provides can help illuminate the existence of the informal economy which can be conceived as an integral part of secondary labour markets.

Chapter two reviews the literature discussing theoretical perspectives that will provide the conceptual framework of this study. The aim of this chapter is to provide a background for an analysis of whether immigrant women are pushed or pulled into the informal economy. This chapter links the literature on immigrant women to the informal economy literature by using the framework provided by the second generation labour market segmentation model. The first section of the chapter critically reviews various labour market theories including human capital and first and second generation labour market segmentation theories. The second section explains the subordinate position of immigrant women in the Canadian labour market by using the second generation segmentation model. Finally the third section defines the concept of informal economy, explains the factors contributing to the growth of informal economy and suggests and outlines the characteristics and motivation of the informal workers.

Chapter three describes the methods which were used in data collection and data analysis. Chapter four gives a profile of the immigrant women in the sample, thereby attempting to answer the first research question about who are these women. Chapter five and Chapter six outline the informal work reasons and informal work experiences of the immigrant women in the sample.

Finally Chapter seven summarizes and discusses the results within the theoretical framework provided in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

In the introduction we briefly reviewed the labour market characteristics and positions of immigrant women in Canada. We saw that immigrant women were stereotyped as women of colour, who do not speak English or who speak with an accent. These ethnic and racial stereotypes lead to discriminatory practices forcing immigrant women into low-level jobs in the labour market (Ng, 1988). This chapter will address the following question: "Why are immigrant women usually located in the lower echelons of the labour market?" We will try to explain immigrant women's subordinate position in the labour market by looking at various structural and individual factors, and the role of the state. Furthermore, by reviewing the literature on informal work this chapter will attempt to define the concept of informal work, outline the characteristics of it, look at the structural factors underlying the growth of the informal economy in advanced capitalist countries, and highlight the individual motivations for informal work. The review of literature contained in this chapter will provide a theoretical framework for analyzing why immigrant women work informally. Specifically, we are interested in determining whether if these women are pushed into the informal economy or if there are factors which pull them into informal work.

2.1 THEORIES OF LABOUR MARKET INEQUALITY

Two major theories have dominated the discussions of labour market inequalities in the literature: human capital theory and labour market segmentation theories.

2.1.1 Human capital theory

Human capital theory, which is rooted in neo-classical economics, assumes the existence of a single open labour market where individuals compete with equal amounts of information, opportunities and choice (Becker, 1975; Krahn & Lowe, 1988). According to this theory, all potential employees have equal access to job openings except for those without the necessary qualifications. Education is regarded as an investment, a form of "human capital", which can be "cashed in" for better paying jobs. According to the theory, people with more education and training are entitled to higher paying jobs. Within this framework, differences in occupational status, pay, benefits, and job security are primarily attributed to differing investments in human capital.

While focusing on the individual characteristics (i.e., education) human capital theory ignores the importance of the structural factors (i.e., social class background, family circumstances) and the personal attributes (i.e., gender, race, ethnicity) which influence one's occupational position in the labour market. Obviously women, ethnic and racial minorities in society are less likely than others to benefit from their human capital. Human capital theory fails to explain why skilled, educated and highly motivated workers such as women, immigrants or members of racial minorities are paid much less than they are entitled to earn (Krahn & Lowe, 1988:73; Kalleberg and Sorenson, 1979:353).

2.1.2 Labour market segmentation theories

Labour market segmentation theories arose as a critique of human capital theory. These theories dispute the single open labour market assumption of human capital theory and point out the existence of segmented labour markets which offer differential access and rewards. There are several versions of the labour market segmentation theories (i.e., dual, radical, internal)

Dual labour market segmentation theory, developed by Doeringer & Piore (1971), posits the existence of two segments in the labour market: primary and secondary. According to this theory, internal labour markets develop as skills are becoming more and more firm-specific and worker's productivity is becoming more and more a function of his/her job training and experience, and hence of his/her length of service within the firm (Rubery, 1978:332).

Jobs in the primary and secondary segments are mainly differentiated by stability characteristics and employees working in these segments have different work experiences and rewards (Kreckel, 1980).

Primary jobs require stability and more developed job habits because the skills in the primary jobs are more firm-specific rather than general (Doeringer & Piore, 1971). The workers in these jobs are highly trained and have relatively higher wages, good opportunities for upward mobility and a greater job security. The organizations in the primary sector are capital intensive and more often aim to avoid high rates of labour turnover. To these organizations high levels of labour turnover means costly retraining programs. Thus, in order to maintain a stable, well-trained and committed workforce, these organizations provide job security, relatively good wage and benefit packages, and also attempt to improve the working conditions.

The jobs in the secondary segment, by contrast, do not require such stability. They have low wages and high turnover rates. The enterprises in the secondary segment are labour intensive and have smaller profit margins. They face intense competition, which means that employers have difficulties in imposing increased labour costs on customers and hence are more vulnerable to economic cycles which place downward pressure on wages (Krahn & Lowe, 1988:87). Little on the job training and low skill requirements make workers easily replaceable. Thus, low pay is common and labour turnover is high, a situation which makes unionization difficult.

These secondary jobs are frequently described as "job-ghettos" and they are mainly filled by women, youth and minority (ethnic and racial) workers (Gordon, 1972). Movement of potentially qualified individuals out of these secondary markets is restricted by certain structural barriers, such as credentials (e.g., a degree, union card, membership in a professional association), availability of information about the vacancies within the primary sector, contacts and employer discrimination (i.e., against women, immigrants and racial minorities) (Krahn & Lowe, 1988)

Radical labour market segmentation theory developed out of the dual labour market approach (Gordon, 1972). The radical approach, while retaining the arguments of the dual labour market approach, attributes the origins of stratification in the labour market to the capitalists' need to divide and rule workers (Edwards, 1979; Gordon, Edwards & Reich, 1982). According to radical theorists, early in the 20th century capitalists devised an elaborate system of job stratification as a means of control. This resulted in the proliferation of job categories and the ranking of those jobs in a status hierarchy. The underlying aim of the capitalists was to divide the work force and erode the potential power base of the workers to change the organization of production (Rubery, 1978; Barrera, 1979).

Radical segmentation theorists also point to the existence of several dimensions of segmentation, including sex and race. They argue that gender and race are exploited by the employers as means to keep the work force divided. As the workers competed among themselves for relatively greater access to better jobs, they became more and more divided according to class, race and ethnicity. For these theorists, employer discrimination, together with other barriers, is one of the major sources of segmentation in the labour market.

The focus on the structural barriers which constrain entrance to primary labour markets is a strength of the labour market segmentation perspective over human capital theory. Moreover, assumptions contained in the labour market segmentation theory about the gender, race and ethnically segregated nature of the labour market provides a broader and more critical perspective. However, there are several difficulties found in labour market segmentation theories. This perspective cannot sufficiently explain the subordinate position of immigrant women in the labour market. Although radical theorists mention the sexual and racial divisions in the labour market, they explain sex and ethnic segregation in terms of employers' conspiracy to divide and rule. They do not explain how sex and ethnic segregation originated in the first place (Hartmann, 1976; Barrera, 1979). Thus, most of this literature continues to stress segmentation based on the structure of occupations (Barrera, 1979). Hence, by concentrating on the demand-side factors only, they ignore the social, political and ideological factors (i.e., racism and sexism) which are crucial in the historical formation of the secondary labour markets which largely consists of women and ethnic and racial minorities.

Furthermore, labour market segmentation theories only view class struggle as one between the capitalists and workers. Radical segmentation theorists attribute job segregation to the capitalists, but they ignore the role played by male workers and the effects of centuries of patriarchal social relations (Hartmann, 1976). Similarly, this type of analysis also obscures the fact that white workers do benefit to a certain degree from the dual labour market by receiving higher wages on average than immigrant or minority workers (Barrera, 1979). Although employers gain more than white employees who compete within the working class, the benefits garnered by the white population at the expense of the non-white population should not be minimized (Barrera, 1979; Segura, 1989).

Recently several attempts have been made to further develop the labour market segmentation theories by addressing some of the criticisms outlined above (Barrera, 1979; Rubery et al., 1984).

Among these reformulations of labour market segmentation theory, the most useful for our purposes is the approach developed by Jill Rubery, Rodger Tarling and Frank Wilkinson

-- the "second generation segmentation theorists".

Second generation segmentation theorists extended and reformulated the model in order to bring a more dynamic and historical approach to the analysis of labour markets (Rubery et. al., 1984). They tried to apply a multi-causal explanation to the problem of segmentation within the labour market. Instead of focusing either on demand or supply-side factors, they underline the importance of both in explaining the origins of segmentation and the role of the state on this segmentation, the reproduction of cheap labour in the secondary labour market and the changing employment patterns.

Following the critiques of the early labour market segmentation theories, the second generation segmentation model reformulates segmentation theory in three key areas.

First, the second generation segmentation model gives a more complex and important role to social class than dual or radical segmentation theories. Like these "first generation" segmentation theories, the later contributors consider power relations or class conflict as a central determinant of labour market structure. Thus, they reject the conspiracy analysis (i.e., managerial control) of the first generation theories. They argue that class struggle works not only at the macro inter-class level, but also within the productive system where conflicts and contradictions between individual, group and class interests become apparent

(Rubery et al., 1984). There are conflicts of interest and different strategies within both labour and capitalist classes (i.e., inter-capitalist competitions). It is these power relations _within_ and _between_ classes which structure labour markets.

They also emphasize industrial conditions, specifically product markets and technology, as a further basis of segmentation. They assert that,

> " ...'economic factors' such as product markets cannot be understood without an understanding of the 'power relations' between capital and labour, the intensity of the competition between capital and the use of divisions in the labour force as a basis for the intra-capitalist competition. Unstable, competitive product markets exist as much because of the use of disadvantaged labour on a casual basis as because of the inherent characteristics of the technology or the market" (Rubery et al., 1984:8).

Thus, second generation theorists place much more importance on the forms of labour organization and the organization of capital as basic elements in determining the operation of the industrial system.

Second, the second generation segmentation model focuses on the role of supply-side factors in structuring labour markets. A set of political, ideological and social forces constitute such factors. For these theorists, this focus on the supply-side is useful in examining the politics of "reproduction of a secondary labour force" (Rubery et.al., 1984:11) and especially the overrepresentation of women and immigrants in the secondary labour market (Kenrick, 1981, Buchele, 1981; Castles & Kosack, 1983).

Finally, the second generation segmentation model emphasizes the role of the state in restructuring and resegmenting the labour market. Accordingly, governments can affect the level of employment and the overall structure of the labour market through various policies: macroeconomic (unemployment, inflation, income distribution), labour market and industry (job creation, job protection, work sharing, temporary employment subsidies), industrial relations (collective bargaining and wage determination), social security and family, and immigration (admitting new sources of labour on the basis of labour market needs) (Rubery et al., 1984). These policies have an important impact on both the supply and demand sides of the labour market. On one hand, restrictive macroeconomic policies cause high levels of unemployment, undermine labour's bargaining strength and increase the relative bargaining power of employers. On the other hand, the provision of generous employment benefits and mandating high minimum wages advance labour's interests by lessening the economic pain of unemployment and raising the floor of the wage structure.

Among different theories studying inequalities in the labour market, the second generation segmentation model provides the most useful framework of analyzing the conditions of immigrant women in the labour force. The second generation models develop a framework that views the sources of segmentation as outcomes of power struggles among social classes in changing economic, political, ideological, legal and institutional settings. This makes their framework more dynamic and therefore applicable across countries, industries and time periods. Furthermore, the framework they provide also is helpful explaining changing work patterns (i.e., subcontracting, outwork) which are important for understanding the informal economy.

2.2 THE REPRODUCTION OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN AS A CHEAP SOURCE OF LABOUR

Ng and Ramirez (1981) point out that immigrant women are commonly recruited in three kinds of services and industries in Canada: in private domestic and janitorial services; service industries including restaurant and food industry; and manufacturing industries such as textile, clothing and leather. In this section, within the framework provided by the second generation segmentation theories, we will first discuss the main characteristics of the industries (product markets, work force and the working conditions) immigrant women work in and their demand for a cheap source of labour. Secondly, we will examine the characteristics of immigrant women and the process of their creation and maintenance as a cheap source of labour in the labour market. Finally, we will address the role of the state in the process of creation of immigrant women as a cheap source of labour.

2.2.1 Characteristics of the industries immigrant women work in Canada

The textile and clothing sector -- which will be referred to as the garment industry -- is the third largest manufacturing employer in the Canadian economy. It is also the largest employer of women and immigrants among the manufacturing industries.

The garment industry by nature is a classic "secondary" sector industry. It is highly competitive and extremely vulnerable to international competition. It has an unstable product market and is considered as a declining industry, since the profits (as a percentage of sales) in the industry declined from 3.6 in 1977 to 2.9 in 1979 (Gannage, 1986:81).

The garment industry is labour intensive, with firms tending to be small and employing on average less than fifty workers. Because of the labour intensive nature of the industry and the relatively low level of technological development, increased productivity and greater profits are obtained by speeding up the work rather than through capital investment. Thus, the work hours are irregular and in periods of recession there is harder work and longer work hours. Due to the unstable nature of the industry, employers want to save every penny they can save. They invest little to make improvements to their factories. Many of the shops are dingy, dirty and crowded. Workers often operate with unsafe machines and materials (Gannage, 1986).

Another feature of the industry is its high labour turnover rate. Workers are easily hired as most of the jobs do not require any special skills, and easily fired in slack seasons or in case of fluctuations in demand. Workers have very little job security. The level of unionization is low. The small size of the firms and the small number of craft or skilled workers makes unionization difficult. Moreover, as in many other secondary firms, high labour turnover makes flexibility in the size of the workforce a natural component of the work process and, at the same time, minimizes the possibility for workers to challenge employers. In this context, firing becomes the means by which employers deal with workers' dissatisfaction, complaints and rebellion.

There is also a lack of well-enforced provincial labour standards legislation. Provinces have labour standards legislations dealing with minimum wage rates, overtime, hours of work, weekly rest days, general holidays, annual paid vacations, termination on employment, maternity leave etc. However, policing these standards in all provinces is lax, and nothing much can be done on piece work rates except to change the labour laws or negotiate different type of contracts (Arnopoulos, 1979:12). This especially affects workers in secondary industries like garment-making.

Moreover, the fines for employers who do not meet minimum labour standards are also very low and rarely are they used in all provinces.

Cleaning and janitorial services, and food and accommodation are the other service industries in which immigrant women are overrepresented. These industries, as well as the garment industry, capitalize upon the existence of the insecure "secondary labour force" and its attendant conditions of low skill and high turnover. The jobs in these industries are labour intensive and poorly paid. Very few of the cleaners are unionized and any gains made through collective bargaining when they are unionized can be easily lost with the tendering of new contracts (Neal & Neale, 1987:39).

Given the nature of the secondary sector industries where immigrant women (especially recent immigrants and those coming from developing countries) are overrepresented, we may ask the following question: "Why do the majority of immigrant women work in old manufacturing industries and new bottom-tier service industries?".

2.2.2 Why do immigrant women work in the bottom tiers of the secondary sector?

Several factors account for the overrepresentation of immigrant women as a cheap labour force in the labour market.

The firms which are labour intensive, with smaller profit margins, exposed to intensive competition (both domestic and international), vulnerable to economic cycles, with unstable product markets and operating with old technologies seek more flexibility to control the labour force and labour costs (Atkinson, 1984, Pollert, 1988). Flexibility in hiring and firing are thus important. A flexible work organization creates a demand for compliant workers with marginal attachment to the labour market and the conditions for the ongoing reproduction of a labour supply possessing these characteristics.

Immigrant women are one of the most vulnerable groups in the labour market that can easily be maintained as a cheap source of labour. They are relatively powerless as they have the double disadvantage of being female and immigrant. They are maintained as a cheap source of labour by the demand in socially undesirable and low income jobs in the secondary segment and confined to these jobs by specific policies and practices which are partially justified by their ascription of individual characteristics (i.e., lack of education, knowledge of language, skills and work experience) (Phizacklea and Miles, 1980).

Patriarchy[5] as an ideology has a major impact on the conditions under which women supply their labour in general (Hartmann, 1976; Walby, 1988). Women's labour market positions are closely linked to their traditional roles within the family and remnants of patriarchy still reinforce stereotypes of women as cheap and docile workers. Women's traditional roles as wives and mothers often limit their employment opportunities and for those who are employed create a "double day" (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1984).

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[5] Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women (Walby, 1990:20). There are two forms of patriarchy: private and public. Private patriarchy is exclusionary. It is based on household production with a patriarch controlling woman individually and directly in the relatively private sphere of the house. Public patriarchy is segmentationist. It is

Stereotyping women as a less committed labour force than men because of their domestic responsibilities has been the basis for confining women to "secondary jobs" (Krahn & Lowe, 1988:130). These occupations become labelled as female guaranteeing that in the future employers would only hire women and the society can justify this on the ideological grounds that these occupations demanded essentially "female" traits (i.e., caring for the sick, the old and the unfortunate, transmitting culture to children, performing domestic chores etc.) (Lowe, 1987).

As well as patriarchal ideology, racist and ethnic stereotyping are other important forces affecting the employment conditions of immigrant women (Phizacklea, 1983). There is a popular image of "immigrant women" created in the Canadian society. The commonsense usage of the term refers to women of colour, women who come from developing

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based on structures other than the household, institutions conventionally regarded as part of the public domain are central in the maintenance of patriarchy (Walby, 1990:178) countries, women who do not speak English very well, and women who occupy lower positions in the occupational hierarchy (Ng & Estable, 1987:29). White, middle-class professional women from Britain or United States are not usually considered "immigrant women" by the society as they can speak fluent English and have no difficulty adopting to Canadian society.

Thus "immigrant women" is a socially constructed category which is used as a means of further stratification by the society (Ng & Estable, 1987). Labelling women as "immigrant women" or "women of colour" divides immigrant women from other women and puts them into a culturally, linguistically and politically inferior position than white and non-immigrant women (Bannerji, 1987).

Moreover, this kind of stereotyping facilitates the construction of ethnic segments in the labour market where knowledge of English, Canadian education and work experience emerge as structural barriers to move on to better paying, higher status jobs. At the same time, the need for cheap sources of labour by employers in the secondary segment continuously perpetuates the ethnic, racist and sexual stereotyping in the society.

State or government policies also have implications for the process of reproduction of immigrant women as a source of cheap labour. One way of doing this is lax policing of minimum wage and labour standards, and low fines for the employers who do not meet these standards. There may be several reasons for this policy of the state. The disappearance of industries like textile and garment industries will add to the already growing unemployment rate in Canada. These declining sectors have several backward and forward linkages with expanding service industries such as wholesale trade and retail. The decline of the textile and garment industries would create bottlenecks in retail and wholesale sectors through spillover effects. Thus, close government monitoring of the employment practices of these industries could increase unemployment in these sectors. Furthermore, monitoring the employment practices of these firms is a costly activity which government may not be willing to do, given budget cutbacks.

Government also helps to make immigrant women a source of cheap labour through its language training and other educational programs. Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) officially funds the language programmes for immigrants in Canada (Seward and McDade, 1988:21). However, the eligibility requirements of the Employment and Immigration Canada programme exclude many immigrant women. These programmes are basically restricted to immigrants who are destined for the official/formal labour force. They are only offered to those who show they need the knowledge of English and French to get jobs on the labour market. Another eligibility criteria is that one has to enter Canada in an independent status. Immigrants who entered Canada in the 'sponsored' or 'independent' status are not eligible to these programmes (Paredes, 1987:23; Seward & McDade, 1988:23). The eligibility requirement set out by Employment and Immigration Canada limit access of a potential group of female immigrants to the language programmes, given that the majority of the immigrant women enter Canada in a sponsored or dependent status6. Sponsored immigrants are also not eligible for state subsidized educational programmes, which may provide them with an avenue of upward mobility. Only the independent immigrants are eligible for these programmes (Ng, 1988:190). All these restrictions coupled with family responsibilities and obligations severely limit the job opportunities of immigrant women. They are forced to find jobs in the marginal or secondary labour markets.

Since the beginning of the 1970s the Canadian government has admitted large numbers of domestic workers on short-term permits from the Caribbean, The Philippines and other developing countries. As they come to Canada on short-term permits, these mainly female workers cannot change their work. The government deliberately puts this condition on their entrance in order to satisfy the great demand for domestics by more affluent Canadian families.

Domestic workers are one of the most disadvantaged

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6 Between 1980 and 1986 53% of women entered in 'sponsored' or 'independent' status compared to less than 41% of men (Seward & McDade, 1988:7).

group among the immigrant workers in Canada. They are isolated, toil for sub-minimum wages and they have no union protection or protection by employment standards legislation. In the early 1970s, when the government increased the number of domestics entering on work permits, Canadian employers were given complete freedom to arrange payment and working conditions. Although the government asks employers to sign some documents regarding the amount of wage and work hours in order to protect the domestic workers, this system does not function effectively. Generally, employers do not live up to their agreed conditions and employees cannot complain as they are often threatened with deportation in case of any official complaint (Arnopoulos, 1979:29).

On the basis of the discussions above we can conclude that as a result of the interplay between the supply and demand factors in the labour market, there is a continuous process of creation and maintenance of immigrant women as a cheap source of labour in the labour market. Firms operating in the secondary segment which are exposed to intense domestic or international competition demand a source of cheap labour in order to survive. Immigrant women -- one of the most disadvantaged groups in the labour market -- are willing to provide this cheap labour as they have few other options (Ng & Estable, 1987). Social, political and ideological forces in society create and continuously reproduce them as a cheap source of labour. State policies are an important component of this creation and reproduction process.

2.3. INFORMAL ECONOMY

2.3.1 The concept of an informal economy

What is the informal economy? Where does it start and where does it end? Which activities are informal and which are not? These are questions with uncertain answers.

The informal economy is usually defined in the literature as "all the exchanges and transactions occurring among individuals or units of production that can not be recorded and regulated by the institutions of society" (Fernandez-Kelly & Garcia, 1989; Castells and Portes, 1989). This is a very general definition of informal economy which only helps us to differentiate between what informal economy is and what it is not. At the same time, it is almost impossible to construct a definition of the informal economy which specifies the boundaries, types of activities and people involved. This is because informality does not result from the intrinsic characteristics of the economic activities. As Castells and Portes (1989:11) point out, the informal economy is a commonsense notion which has moving social boundaries. These boundaries vary according to specific contexts and historical periods and the variations in the form and effects of informalization process reflect the character of the specific social and economic order (Castells and Portes, 1989:32).

There are three types of informal economic activities that are defined in the literature (Gershuny, 1983; Jenkins & Harding,1989):

(1) **Household economic activity,** which is the production of goods and services for the consumption of the household members within the household.

(2) **Communal economic activity,** which involves the free exchange of goods and services between households, for example, baby-sitting pools and volunteer work.

(3) **Underground or irregular economic activity,** which uses money as a medium of exchange and generates income (Gershuny, 1983:35; Ferman & Brendt, 1981:26).

For the purpose of this study we will limit our discussion of the informal economy to the income-generating informal economic activities which are called "underground", "hidden" or "irregular". This type of informal economy includes a variety of activities from small-scale production and trade, subcontracting, homeworking, semi-clandestine production and moonlighting to criminal activities such as drug dealing and prostitution[7] (Materra, 1985).

The informal economy we consider here is not very different from the formal economy. The distinction between the formal and the informal economy is based on the presence of public recordings and regulations. Formal economic activities are recorded and regulated; informal activities are not. While this type of a distinction tends to create a dichotomy between the formal and the informal economy, recent studies show that this dichotomy, in fact, is a simplification (Fernandez-Kelly & Garcia, 1989; Jenkins & Harding, 1989). The formal and the informal economies are not two separate economies but rather the informal economy is an integral part of the formal economy:

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[7] The criminal informal activities will be excluded here to limit the scope of the study.

> "... workers often move intermittently between the two economies, responding to need and opportunity created by the economic environment and by policies emanating from state or federal agencies. Small licensed companies may resort to unauthorized productive arrangements during times of crisis. In contrast, law abiding firms may occasionally engage the services of homeworkers to supplement production during the periods of increasing demand. Thus, the formal and informal sectors appear to be divided by a highly porous membrane, not a rigid boundary." (Fernandez-Kelly & Garcia, 1989:251).

Defining the formal and the informal economy as two different spheres fails to see the systematic linkages between the two. Moreover, creating a dualism between the formal and the informal and labelling all economic activities as either one or the other ignores the subtle differences between intermediate economic activities (Jenkins and Harding, 1989:48).

Jenkins and Harding (1989) suggest that formal and the informal economy can be seen as two opposite ends of a continuum where the degree of regulation determines the degree of informality. The difference between the formal and the informal loses meaning when there is minimal or no institutional regulation in the society. On the other hand the difference becomes remarkable when there is more regulation, and more people trying to escape these institutionalized regulations (Castells & Portes, 1989).

2.3.2 Growth of the informal economy

Research on the informal economy first began in the early 1970s. Keith Hart first introduced the concepts of the informal sector in his 1973 International Labour Organization (ILO) study of the labour market conditions in Ghana. Although similar activities have been observed in developed countries (Fiege, 1979), the concept did not gain much initial popularity in the developed countries until the late 1970s. This is primarily due to the assumption that informal activities are features of Third World economies in which they function as a refuge from poverty. Many labour market theorists (i.e. first generation segmentation theorists) considered informal or casual employment as marginal or archaic and confined them to the traditional and declining manufacturing sectors (Rubery and Wilkinson, 1981). For this reason, they expected these activities to disappear with the advancement of industrialization (Portes et al., 1986). However, despite rapid industrialization informal activities did not disappear. On the contrary, they expanded rapidly in the developed as well as developing countries.

There are several factors which have played a role in the growth of the informal economy. A key factor suggested by Brusco (1982) and Sabel (1982) is the reaction to the power of organized labour by both employers and individual workers. According to this view, unorganized workers oppose unions because unions as corporatist pressure groups are eager to defend their own interests at the expense of unorganized labour. Opposition to unions comes from businesses who view unions as obstacles to capitalist accumulation (i.e., profits). Thus, informalization is a common practice in undermining organized labour's control over the work process. However, this is not the sole cause of informalization. In fact, many of the sectors which have undergone rapid informalization (i.e., restaurants, personal services and the like) are not unionized.

Another important contributing factor to informalization cited in the literature is the reaction against state regulation of the economy, both in terms of taxes and social legislation (Castells and Portes, 1989). As the global recession started to show its effects in the 1970s, health and environmental controls imposed during the 1960s, social benefits achieved under the auspices of the welfare state, the tax increases necessary to pay for them came under attack (Castells and Portes, 1989:28). The increasingly precarious nature of many regular jobs with increasing tax burdens made many people look for work in the informal economy.

The third factor cited in the literature is the increased international competition from developing countries which affects labour-intensive industries in particular. Labour intensive manufacturing industries such as garment, leather and footwear cannot compete with cheaper imports from developing countries. This has meant that many companies have either had to go out of business, or go "off-the-books" (Materra, 1985:16). Small entrepreneurs operating in declining industries (i.e., garment, textile, footwear etc.) keep their existence unknown to the government, so that they are better able to ignore labour laws and regulations as well as evade taxes.

The final and most important factor contributing to informalization is the effect of the global economic crises of the late 1970s and early 1980s on the living and working conditions of the people in industrialized countries. In this period old promises of good and steady jobs for all, good fringe benefits, and adequate social services were no longer easily obtained reality. Instead, many people have been mobilized to work and earn their living on the margin of rules and organizational arrangements that no longer fit their real conditions and experiences (Castell and Portes, 1989:29). Until the 1970s, researchers considered the informal economy as the characteristics of the poor only, as long as the mainstream economy remained fairly sound. However, with the onset of the economic crises of the 1970s, other groups of the population found themselves experiencing some of the same conditions (Materra, 1985:20). The informal economy became an integral part of capitalism.

2.3.3 Characteristics and motivations of the informal workers

The informal economy is heterogenous in terms of the individual participants' characteristics as well as their activities. As Ferman and Brendt (1981) note there is no one type of informal worker. The informal economy is composed of people from all walks of life. It includes full-time and part-time formal workers, new entrant to the labour market and people who are not officially in the labour market such as homemakers, students, retired people and the like. Furthermore, it is not dominated by any particular racial, ethnic, social or occupational group (Ferman & Brendt, 1981:38).

As we discussed earlier, there is little difference between the formal and informal economies other than the fact that the former is registered and regulated and the latter is not. The informal economy is an integral part of the formal economy. Therefore they have a lot of characteristics in common. Similar to individuals in the formal economy, individuals in the informal economy do not have equal access to potential sources of income and job opportunities. It is even possible to observe similar sexual and ethnic segregation among informal workers which are seen as the main characteristics of the formal labour market. Women still do "women's work" like babysitting, tailoring, domestic cleaning, or they work in the sweatshops of manufacturing industry, such as garment industry, or in low-status personal service jobs.

If everything in the informal economy is similar to the formal economy, then why do people work in the informal economy? What motivates people to work informally?

Ferman and Brendt (1981:38) note that people may be drawn into informal activities through their normal process of acculturation, through recruitment by friends or neighbours who need a particular service, from the outgrowth of a hobby or leisure time-pursuit, as an outlet for skills not utilized in formal employment, or as a way of avoiding or evading taxes.

For some informal economic activity might be a cushion during an economic crises. For others, it might be a way of supplementing an insufficient income or a retirement pension. It may simply be a means of earning some extra money for special purchases. Some people might work informally in order not to jeopardize their eligibility for government benefits such as welfare and unemployment insurance (Materra, 1985).

Furthermore, studies of the informal economy illustrate that motives are not always financial in origin. The greater flexibility of most jobs in the informal economy is one of the most important factors appealing to individuals. The informal economy requires less stringent credentials to gain entry (Hoyman, 1987). Work in the informal economy also has a greater possibility of being home-based. This is particularly appealing to mothers who have dependent children. Recent research on the "family life cycle" (Vinay, 1985) and household survival strategies (Pahl, 1984) show that women who have independent children withdraw from formal wage-work and involve themselves in informal work at home. This enables them to carry out the domestic work that typically falls to the women in the gender division of labour, while at the same time enabling them to make cash contributions to the family income (Vinay, 1985; Lozano, 1989).

Finally, for some people informal work is a way of survival without submitting to the routine of a formal job (Ferman & Brendt, 1981).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we reviewed the literature on immigrant women and the informal economy and outlined the theories that explain labour market inequalities in order to provide a basis for the analysis and discussions of informal work among immigrant women. Following second generation segmentation theories we will propose that there is a multi-causal explanation of labour market segmentation and the reproduction of cheap sources of labour in the market. Labour demand and supply factors and state policies affect the emergence of segmented labour markets and a divided work force.

From the review of the literature on the informal economy and the characteristics of informal work we can draw similarities between informal work and secondary labour market jobs. Although second generation segmentation theorists do not refer to the informal economy directly in their studies, they explain the use of outwork (which can be informal) as a form of labour organisation in the secondary labour market (Rubery & Wilkinson, 1981). They assert that outwork is demanded by firms to adjust to the flux and uncertainty in the industrial system as a whole (Piore, 1979: Piore & Berger, 1980; Sengenberger, 1981), and more specifically, as a means of meeting the flexible demand for labour services characteristic of technology at different stages of development and operating in different types of product markets. Accordingly, outwork fits very well into the perspective that segmentation is both a medium for and the result of the struggle for control over the labour process between capital and labour. For example, subcontracting of labour is used to evade union imposed costs and union basis for control. Outwork also brings into focus the structure of the labour supply, which is a further dimension to the understanding of segmentation. Outwork provides a means of mobilising a latent reserve supply of labour, and utilising a supply of labour at low wage cost (Beechey, 1977; Barret & Mc Intosh, 1980). However, second generation segmentation theorists while focusing their attention on the informal work in the old manufacturing industries such as garment industry only, they ignore other forms of informal work in the service industries.

Later in this study, we will use the concepts developed by second generation segmentation theories to explain the informal work reasons and experiences of immigrant women in Canada. We will not only use their concepts in explaining the informal work reasons of immigrant women in the manufacturing industry but will also use them for informal service industry workers. We will explore whether these women are pushed into the informal economy because of the barriers and problems they face in the formal economy or they self-select it because of the flexibility the informal economy provides and how their informal work experiences differ from the formal work experience?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 RATIONALE FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

This study on the informal economy participation of immigrant women in Canada is exploratory in nature and uses a qualitative research design. A qualitative research design was selected because, very little is known about the subjective work experiences and reasons of immigrant women working informally in Canada. In fact, there is little known about the informal work perceptions and subjective experiences of the informal workers in general (Jenkins & Harding, 1989). Until now, studies on the informal economy have, either attempted to quantify the informal economy in monetary terms by measuring the tax loss or they have tried to estimate the size of the informal labour force (Materra, 1985; Fiege, 1981; Tanzi,1980; Ferman & Brendt, 1980). Other studied the informal economy from the point of view of household consumption and production (Pahl,1980). There is clearly a need for more studies that consider informal workers' perceptions and accounts of what themselves are doing and why they are doing (Jenkins and Harding, 1989).

The aim of this study is to gain an understanding of immigrant women's informal work reasons and experiences from their perspectives. The research questions addressed in this study are: (a) Why do immigrant women work informally? (b)

Are they pushed into informal economy because of the problems and barriers they face in the formal economy or are there any other reasons that pull them into the informal economy? (c) What are their work experiences in the informal economy? The nature of these research questions calls for a qualitative study, because qualitative methods are the most useful and powerful method when describing the phenomena from the respondent's perspective (McCracken, 1988).

3.2 SELECTION OF THE INFORMANTS

3.2.1. Finding the informants

The informants in this study are immgrant women (who were born outside Canada) working in any kind of paid informal economic activity (either during the time of the interviews or previously). We focus on paid informal activity only in order to limit the scope of the study.

Doing research on the informal economy presents many difficulties. The informants are difficult to find because they do not have any listings in the yellow pages or official statistics. Even when they are found, it is hard to persuade them to take part in a research study as they fear the risk involved in revealing their informal activities. These people, essentially, are participating in tax evasion which could have serious implications if discovered by the Revenue Canada. Thus, the availability of informants depended both on researcher's contacts in the community and the trust relationship built between the researcher and the informants.

This study used a "snowball" sampling technique in which the interviewed and other contacts in the community were asked to suggest additional people for interviewing. Twenty informal immigrant women workers are interviewed for this study. Seventeen of the informants belonged to the same ethnic group as we did. These women were found through our contacts in the ethnic community. Having the same ethnic origin and speaking the same language with these women helped us a lot in building a trust relationship between us and the informants. We found the other three women (three cleaning ladies) through our Canadian friends who employed them. These women agreed to join the study as they trusted their clients and knew that their clients would not cause any harm to them. Selection of the informants according to certain occupational categories was not possible because of the difficulty in finding and persuading subjects to be interviewed.

Interviewing started in November 1989. After interviewing eight women in Edmonton between November 1989 and January 1990, problems surfaced in finding more informants to interview. Around this period of time, all of the informal workers that we had been referred to turned down our requests to be interviewed. This continued until March 1990, when we met an immigrant woman in Edmonton who had worked informally as a leather apparel worker in Montreal prior to her moving to Edmonton. This woman had very interesting stories of her own as an informal leather apparel worker. She was also willing to arrange our meeting with her friends who worked under same circumstances with her in Montreal. This was a very good opportunity to expand the sample and add regional variety to the data in terms of different employment forms and relations within the context of the informal work activities immigrant women involved in. Therefore, we took the opportunity and went to Montreal in April 1990.

We did half of the interviews in Montreal (n=10). Among the women we interviewed in Montreal, there were seven leather apparel or ex-leather apparel workers and three babysitters. We did the other half of the interviews in Edmonton. The Edmonton data consisted of three babysitters, three cleaning ladies, two home-based seamstresses, one hairdresser and one ex-leather apparel worker.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

3.3.1.Procedure

We collected twelve out of twenty interviews by tape recorder. Eight of the informants requested not to be taped. Therefore we recorded their interviews by hand.

We interviewed the informants only once and conducted all but three of the interviews in respondents' home. Three interviews took place in the homes of the contact persons who introduced the informants. Interviews lasted from 40 minutes to an hour and a half.

We carried out the majority of the interviews in respondents' native language. Only in one case a voluntary interpreter helped us with the interview. In this case, the interpreter translated the questions and answers word by word, without adding her own interpretation. We conducted two of the interviews in English as we did not speak the native language of the informants but they understood and communicated in English. Language difficulties only arised with one of these women. This woman understood our questions but as her English was poor, she could not give detailed answers. Another unexpected barrier to get detailed information was the education level. Even among those women that we interviewed in their native language, we observed that women with low education levels gave very short answers without going into the detail of their experiences, in comparison to the long answers provided by women with higher education levels. The longest and most interesting interviews were obtained from women who had higher education levels.

We transcribed all the taped interviews and organized the hand written notes in verbatim after each interview. The immediate transcription of the early interviews, in particular, was important as this showed what else needed to be asked in the next interviews.

We translated all the interviews that I conducted in my native language into English word by word in order to obtain the most reliable results.

3.3.2 Interview Schedule

We followed a relatively unstructured approach to data collection. We had a list of questions that we asked in every interview (see Appendix A). However, we also asked spontaneous questions during the interviews in relation to the responses we received from the informants.

The major theoretical perspectives which guided us in conducting the interviews were the literature on immigrant women, informal economy and the labour market segmentation theories. These theoretical frameworks provided us with a set of initial questions that we expanded on while we were formulating research specific concepts. The theoretical perspectives stimulate the researcher to deductively formulate questions that elicit data that leads to the formulation of inductive concepts (Glaser, 1978; Strauss and Corbin, 1989). They also provide orienting constructs that outline the main dimensions to be used (Miles and Huberman, 1984).

We used an open-ended in-depth interview schedule in order to draw the intricate details of immigrant women's lives, experiences and behaviour. The interviews were more in the form of a guided conversation in which both the informants and we shared information and contributed to the research process (Oakley, 1981).

During the interviews we sought an egalitarian relationship between us and the participants in order to get more detailed information. We frequently brought up our own experience as a woman and a foreigner in this country, in order to be able to get more detailed information about their experiences.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

We used the constant comparison or grounded theory method introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as the method of data analysis. However, following Kirby and McKenna (1989) we elaborated on the systematic approach developed by Glaser and Strauss by giving priority to two components: intersubjectivity and critical reflection on the social context. "Intersubjectivity is an authentic dialogue between all participants in the research process in which all respected as equally knowing subjects" (Kirby and McKenna, 1989:129). Critical reflection on the social context involves, an examination of the social reality "within which people exist and out of which they are functioning" (Finson, 1985:117). In order to make sense or fully understand the data and affect change we have to understand the contextual patterns and how they are sustained and controlled (Kirby and McKenna, 1989:129). Thus, while managing and analyzing the data we gave priority to the voices of the immigrant women and by providing the background information on the industries or firms they worked in or the clients they worked for we tried to present the context where their experiences has occurred.

3.4.1 Grounded theory method

In the grounded theory method the analysis of the data proceeds in stages. The data is first broken down into discrete parts and they are coded. While coding it is closely examined and compared for similarities and differences between incidents. The incidents are compared with incidents for a pattern and they are given conceptual labels (Strauss and Corbin, 1989). Those concepts that seemed to pertain to the same phenomena are grouped together and categorized. Incidents are compared with categories and categories with categories to make connections between the categories. Finally, all the categories are integrated together to form a grounded theory.

3.4.2 Organizing the data

First, we translated the data from each interview if they were conducted in a language other than English. Then we transcribed and typed them. We divided the data into pieces in preparation for coding and cross-referencing. Kirby and McKenna call these bits of data bibbits (1989). A bibbit is a passage from a transcript, a piece of information from field notes or a section of the document that stands on its own but can be relocated in its original context when it is necessary (p.135).

We identified these bibbits first. We labelled these bits of data sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase and categorized them according to their properties or themes. We made several copies of each transcript so that we would be able to put these bibbits into as many categories as its content and context required. We manually cut the bibbits from different interviews and put them into separate category files. This process is called open-coding in Glaser and Strauss (1967).

3.4.3 Linking the categories

Categories are linked to each other through the process of reduction (Stern, 1980; Corbin, 1986). Categories are constantly compared to one another to create more general categories. Finally core categories are selected, systematically relating them to other categories. The core category was obtained by asking several questions: What is the main story line, the main pattern or theme? How do other categories relate to it? What categories do all categories seem to be leading? What umbrella category would encompass other categories? (Reutter, 1991:63).

Substantive theories developed from the categorized data that help to describe and explain the research focus.

These theories remain close to the data (Kirby and McKenna, 1989:137).

The final step is linking these findings to the existing theories and to see how the findings confirm, extend or refute the existing literature (Glaser, 1978). In this research the findings will be compared to existing labour market segmentation theories and the literature on immigrant women in Canada and informal economy.

3.4.4 General Framework of the Findings

The findings will be organized around three themes: profile of the informants, informal work reasons and experiences.

While examining the informal work reasons and experiences of the informants we will divide the data into two on the basis of work place - informal work inside or outside the home - as the work reasons and work experiences were more similar among these two groups.

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All the participants voluntarily took part in this study. A full explanation of the purpose of the study is given to each informant before the interview. The informants were ensured that their names and ethnic origins would be anonymous and strictly confidential to protect their identity. No names have been mentioned in the taped interviews and the interviewees are given coded names. Therefore, no harm will be inflicted on these women related to their participation in this study. The audiotapes and transcripts used in this study are locked in a file cabinet for potential future analysis.

The respondents were told that a summary of the main findings would be available to them upon request. I also plan on circulating a summary at a community meeting soon after this thesis is complete.

CHAPTER 4

PROFILE OF THE INFORMANTS

This chapter focuses on the background characteristics of the immigrant women interviewed for this study. It intends to answer the question "Who are these women?" by examining their demographic, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

4.1 IMMIGRATION STATUS UPON ARRIVAL TO CANADA

The immigrant women in this study are grouped in three categories according to their immigration status to Canada:

(1) **Refugee claimants:** Those women who have applied for conventional refugee status, but have not been accepted yet. As of April 1990, the applications of the ten respondents in this group were still being processed by Immigration and Employment Canada. Although these individuals were not yet landed immigrants, they had employment authorization and were eligible for social benefits (i.e., unemployment insurance, health care etc.) provided by the welfare state.

(2) **Conventional refugees:** Those who left their country for fear of being prosecuted due to their political activities and beliefs. Two women in my sample are in this category.

(3) **Landed immigrants admitted to Canada under "family class" or "assisted relative" category:** These women were either sponsored by their husbands who entered Canada under "independent immigrant status" or by other close relatives

(i.e., parents, brothers or sisters) who already lived in Canada. There are eight women in my sample who entered under this category.

The number of years these women have spent in Canada are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF YEARS IMMIGRANT WOMEN SPENT IN CANADA

Number of years spent in Canada	Number of immigrant women
Less than 5 years	10
5 - 9 years	4
10 - 14 years	1
15 - 19 years	3
20 years and over	2
TOTAL	20

Half of the respondents were recent immigrants who have been in Canada less than five years. All of the recent immigrants were refugee claimants.

Most of the refugee claimants came to Canada due to declining living standards in their home country.

> **FT:**...economic conditions back home were getting worse and worse everyday. My husband had a furniture store in our home town. The business was very slow. Finally, one day he said "If we stay in this business any longer we will bankrupt. Let's sell the store and go to Canada. Let's try living there for a while". We did so. We sold

> the store, left the children with my parents and came here.

Almost all of the refugee claimants heard about the high standard of living in Canada before they came. Many of them had friends or relatives who had already immigrated to Canada, providing them with a viable option.

> **OM:** A fellow from our home town immigrated to Canada many years ago. He settled in Toronto, he sells carpets. He owns his store, he has a house and a car.. he is doing pretty well...If he did it, why shouldn't we do it too? There are lots of good opportunities here..

> **FA:** My brother-in-law and his family lived in Canada. They moved here long time ago and their living conditions were very well. For many years they have been telling us to move to Canada ...

Although many of these women decided to move to Canada for economic reasons, very few applied to become landed immigrants while they were in their home country. While a few of the women's husbands had applied for landed immigrant status, many were rejected because their occupational groups were not in demand in the Canadian labour market. Hence, all of the women and their husbands arrived in Canada as visitors and then claimed refugee status:

> **FA:**...[my husband] applied for landed immigrant status in 1985 but he was rejected. So in 1986 we packed everything and came [to Canada]...People suggested that we would have more chances to be accepted if we came to Canada and apply from

> here...

Many of the refugee claimants sold all their belongings in their home countries and arrived in Canada to start new lives. None of them knew whether or not they would be able to stay in this country permanently when they arrived:

> **OM:** We sold our land, I sold my jewellery, we also borrowed some money from the relatives and came to Canada...

Three of the refugee claimants left their children behind with other relatives. They wanted to confirm what they had heard about the living conditions in Canada before making their final decision to move. Their plans were to stay in Canada for a while to explore the living conditions. Once satisfied and with permission to stay, they would bring their children. Otherwise, they would return to their home country. They all liked Canada and decided to stay. However, none of them expected that the processing of their refugee claims would take a minimum of four years. All the refugee claimants came to Canada four years ago and still their claims had not been heard.

> **FA:**...We left our children with my parents and came to see the living conditions in [Canada]...We miss our children a lot. We cannot go back home and we don't have enough money to bring them over here...They [the immigration officials] told us "you are refugee claimants, you complained about the economic conditions in your country, if you go back for a visit you will lose your chances to become refugees because then it means there is no

vital problem for you to live in your own country. These refugee claimants were all eager to learn the final decision from the Canadian immigration officials. They all reported that it no longer mattered whether they would be allowed to stay here or not. They merely wanted to have a final decision so that they could make plans for the future. They were all reluctant to make any plans or investments in Canada, since none of them knew how many more days or years they would be allowed to stay in this country.

The two immigrant women who entered Canada under refugee or family class status had been in this country for a longer period of time than the refugee claimants. They were both from former Eastern Block countries. One of these women came to Canada six years ago, the other came eight years ago.

The women who entered Canada under family class status stayed in this country for a relatively longer period of time than the women who entered under refugee and refugee claimant statuses. The most recent immigrant in this group arrived in Canada six years ago. There were also some women in this group who came to Canada 25 or 30 years ago. Among the women in this category, three came to Canada with their parents or relatives when they were young, two came with their husbands. Three of them were married to men who already had been working in Canada. GS was one of them:

> GS: My husband was working in Canada [before we've got married]. In the summer of 1972 he came to [home country] for a visit. We met, liked each other, and got married. We married in August and I came here in September [the same year] on a tourist visa. I applied for landed immigrant status here.

4.2 RESPONDENTS' AGES

About half of the women I interviewed were between thirty and thirty-nine years old (see Table 2). Seven of these women were in their mid-twenties. The youngest was nineteen years old and the oldest was fifty-four years old when interviewed.

TABLE 2. RESPONDENTS' AGES

Ages of immigrant women	Number of immigrant women
19 and less	1
20-29	7
30-39	9
40-49	1
50 and over	2
TOTAL	20

4.3 MARITAL STATUS, NUMBER AND AGES OF CHILDREN

The majority of the immigrant women I interviewed were married with children (see Tables 3 and 4).

TABLE 3. MARITAL STATUS

Marital status	Number of immigrant women
Single	1
Married	17
Separated	2
TOTAL	20

There was only one single woman. She was nineteen years old. She entered Canada under family class status and lived with her brother and his family. Two women separated from their husbands in Canada. One of them had four children and the other one had five. One of the separated women was refugee and the other one was a refugee claimant. They were both on welfare. Only the one with four children received financial support from her ex-husband. The remaining respondents were all married.

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF CHILDREN

Number of children	Number of immigrant women
0	2
1	2
2	9
3	4
4	1
5	2
TOTAL	20

When I did the interviews there were only two women who did not have any children. One of these women was eight months pregnant at the time of the interview.

The majority of the respondents had two or more children. Half of the respondents in the sample had children of preschool age. There were two women who had babies younger than one year of age. There were also two pregnant women. Nine out of ten refugee claimants had a baby born in Canada. The remaining woman was also pregnant at the time of the interviews. Even the women who were not planning to have another child, had one child in Canada since they thought this might help their stay in this country as refugees.

The refugee claimants had more preschool children than any other group. There was only one women who had a preschooler among the women who entered in the family class status and there were none among the refugees.

4.4 EDUCATION

TABLE 5. EDUCATION

The level of education	Number of immigrant women
No schooling	1
Elementary school graduate	6
Junior high school graduate	2
High school graduate	9
College/university graduate	2
TOTAL	20

More than half of the respondents had either high school or post secondary, college/university education (see Table 5). There was only one woman without any formal education. Six of the women had Grade 5 education.

One of the university graduates had a degree in education from her home country. She worked as an elementary school teacher for five years before she came to Canada. In Canada, since her English was poor and her degree was not recognized, she had to write exams in order to teach in this country. The other university graduate also had a business diploma from Grant McEwan College in Edmonton.

Among the high school graduates, three women graduated from a high school known as the "Girl's Art Institute" in their home country. This was a high school which trained girls who wanted to specialize in sewing and embroidery. Graduates of this high school worked as sewing instructors or professional tailors in their home country. Similarly, another respondent graduated from a high school where she was trained as an agricultural technician, although she has never worked as one. She worked as a cleaning lady in Canada.

All the women interviewed received their education from their country of origin except for two. One of these women received much of her education in Canada while the other one only studied Grade 6 through Grade 8 here.

AT came to Canada as an immigrant with her parents twenty-three years ago when she was two years old. She had most of her education in Canada. She studied only two years of elementary school and one year of high school in her country of origin. Her parents took her to their home country to study so that she would not lose her cultural heritage. However she came back to Canada because:

> **AT:** "...I really missed Canada. To me [Canada] is my home. That's why I came back..."

AT was one of the college graduates among the immigrant women interviewed. She had a business diploma from Grant McEwan College in Edmonton.

SA, the other woman who studied junior high school in Canada, was not happy with the education and the school experience she had in this country. She didn't share **AT**'s feelings about Canada and the Canadian schooling system. **SA** came to Canada with her mother to stay with her brother who lived here after her father passed away. She was thirteen years old when she came.

> **SA:**"...I was supposed to go to Grade 9 but they put me into Grade 6 as I couldn't speak English...This was very hard for me because I was in the same class with kids three years younger than me...I already knew the things they learnt. I was helping the kids in class with the things they didn't understand. But the students in class didn't like me. I was treated badly because I was a foreigner and getting better grades than them. My grades were excellent. I didn't have any grades lower than 95 in most of the courses..."

Although **SA** was a student with good standing in her class she dropped out of school when she was in Grade 8. She was intimidated by unfriendly and racist attitudes of other students within the school. She described an incident where another student frightened her with a knife and swore at her for being a foreigner with dark skin colour.

> **SA:**"I didn't want to go to school after that incident. I had a nervous breakdown...They sent me

> to a counsellor. He told me to have a break or a vacation..I sat in class but my mind was somewhere else. All my grades went down. I finished Grade 8 but never went to Grade 9...They apologized me over and over again. They sent me letters, they phoned...[However] I will never ever go back to school again. I will rather die but I won't go...I don't want to live the same thing again".

SA worked as a hairdresser in her brother's hair salon informally at the time of the interviews. She did not have a licence which would let her practice her job formally. In order to get a licence she had to have Grade 10 education.

> **SA:**"I have to go back to school in order to get [my licence]. I don't want to do that... It is [ironic] I always dreamt about going to the university in Canada. I never thought I would become a hairdresser one day."

4.5 KNOWLEDGE OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Only three of twenty respondents spoke fluent English. Two of these individuals received most of their education in Canada. The third respondent studied English at high school before coming to Canada. In addition, she had been in this country for almost thirty years.

Recency of arrival in Canada had an important impact on the language skills of the immigrant women. The refugee claimants, who arrived most recently, were in the worst situation. Although a few of these women studied French or English at school in their home country, this was not enough even to carry on daily conversations. Almost all of them had difficulty understanding and speaking the language. The women who worked in places other than ethnic job ghettos appreciated the importance of the knowledge of English or French more than the women who were employed in ethnic job ghettos:

> **NC:** It is very important to be able to speak French in the work place. You are in trouble if you do something wrong because you didn't understand what they asked you to do. It is very hard if you do not speak French because nobody speaks your language here.

For the ones who worked in the ethnic job ghettos, the importance of having a working knowledge of French or English was minimal because the people they worked with usually spoke their language.

The number of women who attended a language course in Canada was lowest among the refugee claimants (two out of ten). Those who did attend, did so for a very short period of time (i.e., two or three weeks).

> **FT:** I went to a French course for two weeks within the first year we came to Canada. The classes were at nights. It was too hard to sit in class and listen to the teacher after working all day long at work. I could hardly keep my eyes open. Two weeks later I quit...

When I asked these women whether they would want to attend a language course in the future or not, very few of them said "yes". The ones who said "yes" only wanted to take language courses if they were staying in Canada permanently.

Although the women who entered under refugee status came earlier than the refugee claimants, their knowledge of language was no better. One of them spoke very little English, while the other one was totally unable to communicate. The latter attended the courses offered by the provincial government for six months. She was attending the free language courses at a church when I interviewed her:

> JC: These courses at the church are only for 20 or 30 weeks. This might be enough for a person who spoke a little bit of English, but for a beginner like me it is not enough.

The women who came to Canada under family class status had relatively better knowledge of one of the official languages than the women in the other two categories. The majority of these women had stayed in Canada longer than the others. Although most of these women did not have any language problems, there were also some among them who still did not feel comfortable with their language skills after staying many years in Canada. For instance, for these women language created various problems in communicating with their children who grew up in Canada. They could not help their children with their school work. More importantly, they did not approve of their children's life styles and attitudes and could not establish authority over their children because of the language problem:

> **GK:**I understand English but it is not enough. For instance, I can not help my children with their homework. My elder son is very lazy. If I could read and write in English, I would make him study. I would sit down and study with him...

Among the women who entered under family class category, the number who attended language courses in Canada was higher (seven out of eight). However, like the refugee claimants most of them attended only for a short period of time. Boredom, lack of energy after work, winter and transportation problems were all among the reasons they gave for quitting the courses.

Many of the women interviewed learned English or French from their friends or neighbours:

> **FA:** My French Canadian friends living in the same apartment helped me a lot to learn French. I learnt French from them. They corrected me when I made mistakes. I don't believe I can learn this much from a language course. It's more than enough if I learn one word everyday from them.

Although many of them learned English or French from the friends and neighbours, some women also learned these languages from television, especially from the daytime soap operas.

4.6 SKILLS

The immigrant women I interviewed mainly possessed basic skills that all women are expected to have such as, cooking, cleaning and nurturing. There were eleven women who also had various levels of sewing skill. Three of them were professional seamstresses. The rest learned sewing either from their mothers or from a close relative:

> **FT:** I began sewing things for myself when I was a little girl. My mother was a good seamstress. Both my sisters and I used to help her when she sewed. But I can't say I like it very much. I hate it...

Many of the women who had sewing skills worked as seamstress (9 out of 11) either at home or in the industry. One of the women who had sewing skills preferred to work as a cleaning lady. She did not feel that her sewing skills were good enough to be a seamstress:

> JC:I don't think I can work as a seamstress because I am not great in sewing. I can do the basic things only, like sewing dresses for my kids. I would not want to ruin people's nice materials.

The other one preferred to do baby-sitting since she liked children better.

By contrast, three of the unskilled women, although they did not have any sewing skills, had their first jobs in the garment industry where they worked as overlockers or lining makers. They learned sewing on the job. In fact many of the jobs in the garment or leather industry do not require extensive sewing skills. These jobs are repetitive and can easily be learned on the job.

> **FA:** I learnt sewing in Canada. In leather business you don't have to be an expert in sewing. All you have to do is combine the pieces together. Leather pieces come readily cut. You just bring the pieces together. It is very easy.

The only other skilled woman was a hair-dresser. Her hair-dressing skills included cutting and perming hair. She worked in her brother's hair salon.

> **SA:** I have never been to a course. I learned everything on the job. Back in [home country] I began working with the hairdressers when I was nine...I used to work in summers. I was an apprentice. But the apprenticeship is different in my country. Apprentices are not allowed to cut hair. They only shampoo and hold the blow-dryer when the hairdresser works on hair. I didn't like that very much...Here I have learnt everything because, my brother let me do everything. I learned how to cut, perm, how to give shape to hair, everything...

Others who had neither sewing nor hair-dressing skills did either babysitting or cleaning homes and offices. **EK** told her story about how she decided to become a cleaning lady:

> **EK:** Well, I was born to be a housewife. You know I was a housewife and a mother. Basically the things I know to do the best. I thought people would like my way of doing that as well...Well, it is basically a part of becoming independent too. I was very dependent on my ex-husband.

4.8 HUSBANDS' OCCUPATION AND INCOME

TABLE 6. HUSBAND'S OCCUPATION AND INCOME

Immig Women	Husband's occupation	Husband's monthly income ($)
YA	Leather Ind. worker (snapper/presser)	1600-2000(N)*
ME	Quilt factory worker	920(N)
FA	Auto-body painter	1400(N)**
GY	Welder (compensated by WCB)	2000(N)
AT	Pipefitter	4000(N)
GS	Electrician	3300(G)***
NA	Mechanical engineer	4500(G)
GK	Electrician / Unemployed / Pizza Del.	UIC+(400-500)*
FT	Pin-screw factory worker/Unemployed	UIC
AY	Turner	1500(N)
HU	Garment factory worker (cutter)	1200(N)**
NC	Turner	1600(N)
ZT	Leather ind. worker	3000(N)*
UB	Chemical engineer	3200(G)
OM	Music instruments factory	1200-1500(N)
EK	Electrician	1600-1800(G)
KV	Carpenter	2000-2200(N)

* designates those who worked informally

** designates those who received overtime payments in cash

*** this is the approximate monthly income. This man made approximately $40,000 annually, but he didn't work the hole year.

N: Net income G: Gross income

There were only two women whose husbands had professional occupations (see Table 6). One was a mechanical engineer and the other was a chemical engineer. There were eight husbands who were skilled workers. Seven of them were unskilled workers. All of the unskilled workers were refugee claimants. Among the refugee claimants there were only two skilled workers (both of the turners were refugee claimants).

There were three women whose husbands were not in the labour force. One of them was a welder who had a work accident in 1984. He was severely burned and no longer worked. He received compensation from the Workers Compensation Board (WCB).

The second unemployed husband was a pin/screw factory worker. He had been unemployed for seven months when I interviewed his wife. He was laid off by the factory management along with ten other workers since the factory was going through financial difficulty. He collected unemployment insurance. He stayed at home and took care of his eight-month-old daughter while his wife worked in a leather factory.

The third unemployed husband was an electrician. He had been unemployed for almost a year. He was on the union list. Due to the shortage of jobs in the market his turn on the union list had not come yet. He collected unemployment insurance and worked informally:

> GK:...My husband delivers pizza...Our friend works in Pizza [...] as a deliverer. Sometimes they needs help there, especially on Friday and Saturday nights...he goes and helps them to make some extra money. He only works five or six nights in a month...there are those nights when he makes over $100 with tips, but there are also those others when he only makes $50(including the tips). He makes around $400-450 a month. It is not much but it helps, because we have two teenagers at home. They have needs, we have to pay mortgage...so it is some extra money.

There were two other informal workers among the husbands. They were both employed in the leather industry as well as their wives. One worked as a snapper/presser. The other one started as a cutter but then became a sewing machine operator.

> ZT:...When we went to Montreal my husband found a painting job in a private company. They painted street lamps, posts etc. He was paid $7 per hour. I told him to come and work in the leather business too. The job is pretty straightforward. He could do it. I told him to come and try. This way we could make lots of money. He was convinced. He started as a cutter but then we decided to sew jackets together. We were paid $20 per piece. We sewed together 15 to 20 jackets per day...We still sew together...but now we only sew 5 or 6 jackets a day. We also supervise other workers in the factory and get extra money for that...

There was another couple like ZT and her husband who worked in a leather factory together. AT and her husband worked for 6 months in a leather factory in Montreal. Although AT's husband was working as a pipefitter when I interviewed AT, he worked as a sewing machine operator in a leather factory before he got his pipefitter ticket. Like ZT and her husband they also shared the job as well as the wages:

> **AT:**My husband sewed the back of the jackets, while I put on the pockets, zippers, cuffs stuff like that...Per piece we were paid $27, but we had to pay $3, sometimes $4 of that to the person who did the lining. So in actuality we were getting paid $23 a piece. We were doing ten jackets a day...So we were together making $230 a day, around $5000 a month cash.

There were also two women whose husbands were formally employed but received overtime payments in cash.

4.9 RESPONDENTS' OCCUPATION

Many of the immigrant women in the sample have worked in several different jobs which makes it hard to classify them under a specific occupational group. For our purposes, occupational classifications were assigned on the basis of the last informal job held. According to this classification, there are eight leather apparel workers, six babysitters, three cleaning ladies, two self-employed seamstresses and one hairdresser in the sample.

In this section I will present the work experiences of the immigrant women both in their home countries and in Canada.

The majority of the women in the sample worked in low paying, low status, low skilled jobs in the labour market. Many of these women moved back and forth between different types of marginal jobs as well as between the formal and the informal sectors.

TABLE 7. RESPONDENTS' OCCUPATION

Immig. Women	Occupation in home country	Occupation and work experience in Canada
YA	Housewife	1.Garment ind. worker (F) (sweatpants/sweatshirts) 2.Quilt factory worker (F) 3.Leather industry worker (F/I) (linings maker) 4.Babysitter (I)
ME	Farmer	1.Quilt factory worker (F) 2.Leather industry worker (F/I) (sewing machine operator)
FA	Housewife	1.Garment industry worker (F) (lingerie) 2.Leather industry worker (F/I) (sewing machine operator)
GY	Housewife	1.Garment industry worker (F)(I) 2.Furrier (F) 3.Self-employed seamstress (I)
AT	She grew up in Canada	1.Assistant Manager at McDonalds 2.Assist. Coordinator at Citizens Advocacy (F) 3.Leather industry worker (I) (sewing machine operator) 4.Housewife
GS	Student	1.Babysitter (I)
NA	Elementary school teacher	1.Babysitter (I)
JC	Furrier	1.Cleaning lady (I) 2.Housewife

GK	Seamstress	1.Cook (own restaurant) (F) 2.Seamstress (F) (dry cleaners) 3.Garment industry worker (F) 4.Self-employed seamstress (I)
FT	Housewife	1.Garment industry worker (F) 2.Leather industry worker (I) (sewing machine operator)
AY	Housewife	1.Panty-hose factory worker (F) (packaging department) 2.Babysitter (I)
HU	Farmer	1.Mirror/frame factory worker (F) 2.Leather industry worker (I) 3.Garment industry worker (F)
NC	Housewife	1.Garment industry worker (F) 2.Leather industry worker (I) 3.Garment industry worker (F)
ZT	Housewife	1.Cleaning lady (I) 2.Seamstress (F) (dry-cleaners) 3.Leather industry worker (I)
UB	Housewife	1.Seamstress (I) (industrial home-working) 2.Babysitting (I)
SA	Student	1.Hairdresser (I)
HA	Farmer	1.Quilt factory worker (F) 2.Babysitter (I)
OM	Farmer	1.Garment industry worker (F) (men's clothing) 2.Leather industry worker (I) (linings maker)
EK	Student	1.Avon lady (F) 2.Babysitter (I) 3.Cleaning lady (I)
KV	Farm worker	1.Cleaning lady (I)

(F): Formal work
(I): Informal work
(F/I): Formal and informal work at the same time.

Just over half of the immigrant women (11 out of 19) interviewed did not have any formal or informal work experience until they came to Canada (see Table 7). Some of these women did not work in the home country because their husbands did not allow them to work. Others were students prior to immigration. Among the women interviewed, only three were formally employed in the home country: an elementary school teacher, a furrier and a seamstress. There were also five women who were either farmers or farm workers. Occupations in the home country varied less in comparison to the occupations held in Canada.

The majority of the women in the sample started working as soon as they arrived in Canada. Among these women fourteen out of twenty had their first jobs in the formal economy. Nine of the women who worked formally were employed in the garment industry. These women worked as sewing machine operators, overlockers, linings makers, or packagers. Two of the formally employed worked in a quilt factory. Another one worked in a mirror/frame factory. One of them ran her own small business, a little gas station restaurant where she did almost everything from managing the restaurant to cooking and cleaning. One other lady among the formally employed worked in a McDonalds' restaurant as an assistant manager. These formal jobs were all jobs outside the home. Many of these jobs had minimum skill requirements and were low status and low paying jobs.

By comparison, it is interesting to note that six out of twenty women had their first work experience in Canada in the informal economy. Among these women there were three domestic cleaners, two babysitters and a hairdresser. These women worked completely informally for under-the-table cash money. Except for babysitting all the jobs were outside the home.

The immigrant women who started working formally in the marginal jobs in the secondary sector (i.e. the garment factory, quilt factory, mirror factory), after trying several jobs within the same sector, switched to one form of informal economic activity. While some of these women exclusively did informal work, others worked informally and formally at the same time or alternated the two.

Only one woman tried formal employment for a while and switched back to informal work. Although switching from totally formal work to totally informal or semi-informal work was a more common practice, the switch from totally or semi-informal to totally formal work was also made by some respondents.

Even many of the women whose husbands did not allow them to work outside the home in the country of origin had to work in Canada to make ends meet.

4.10 CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Seventeen out of twenty women in the sample were from a Middle Eastern Muslim country. Two were from a former Eastern Block and one from a west European country. All the

European women were Roman Catholics.

Among the Middle Eastern women, twelve out of seventeen had either rural or small city origins. These areas are typically characterized as very traditional in terms of following cultural and religious norms. Five women among the Middle Easterners were from big cities where people are more liberal.

Within this group, having a rural or urban background presented a great difference in the level of education the respondents had. While the majority of women with urban origin had high school or post secondary education, women with rural origin had maximum Grade 5 education.

The ideas about women's role in the family and gender roles did not show much difference according to rural or urban origin. Almost all of the Middle Eastern women believed that men were the main breadwinner in the family, they had to work outside the home and provide food for the family. Housework and childcare was the main responsibility of women. However, their way of legitimizing these ideas were very different. While urban women perceived women's roles more as natural.

> AT:...women have to have children and raise children... because this is natural. It is always easier for a woman to change a diaper rather than teach her husband to do it. I think men would probably do it as good as women can do, but they really do not want to learn...

Women with rural or small city backgrounds were more likely to relate this to their religious beliefs:

> NC:...these are the jobs assigned to us. Men are superior to women...Eve is created from the backbone of Adam..So men work outside the home and provide income and women stay at home and raise children.

Interestingly enough, although these women believed their place is home, the majority worked outside the home in Canada. However, the economic need was the main motive rather than choice. Even those whose husbands did not allow them to work outside the home in their home country had to work in Canada due to economic necessities.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have profiled the respondents represented in this study with reference to their demographic, socio-economic and cultural characteristics. We have seen that half of the respondents were refugee claimants who had been in Canada for less than five years. These women had an uncertain future as their refugee claims were still being processed by Immigration Canada.

The majority of immigrant women in the sample were young women between their late twenties and early thirties. Most were married with children and half of them had pre-school age children. More than half of these women had high school or college/university education. However, university degrees acquired in the home country were not recognized in Canada.

Very few of these women were fluent in either of the official languages. Their language skills were very closely related to their recency of arrival in Canada. Those who arrived in Canada less than five years ago were the most disadvantaged in terms of language skills. Very few of them attended the language courses provided by the government. Those who attended only did so for a short period of time. Boredom, lack of energy after work outside the home, winter, transportation problems, family responsibilities were among the reasons given for quitting the courses. Refugee claimants had the lowest attendance rate in a language program. The main reason for this was the uncertain future in Canada. However, some of the refugee claimants stated that they wanted to attend a language course if they were allowed to stay in this country permanently.

Almost half of the women in the sample had only basic skills other than the basic skills such as cooking, cleaning and nurturing. Eleven women had various degrees of sewing skills.

Just about half of the husbands of immigrant women did not have a secure job. Seven of the husbands worked in marginal jobs. Among the skilled workers there were husbands that were unemployed. Very few of the husbands had high income or stable jobs.

The majority of the respondents did not have any formal work experience in their home country. These women did not work either because their husbands did not allow it or they were students prior to immigration to Canada. The majority of the women whose husbands did not allow them to work had to work in Canada due to financial necessities.

Many of the women first started working formally and then switched to informal work. Some of the women only worked informally. Yet some others switched back to formal work after working informally for a while. The jobs they occupied in the formal economy were all marginal jobs (i.e., in the garment industry or in a mirror factory).

The majority of the women in the sample were Muslim. There were also Roman Catholics among the respondents. Whether Muslim or Roman Catholic, the majority had a very traditional perception of the gender roles in the family.

CHAPTER 5

INFORMAL WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME

This chapter examines the informal work reasons and experiences of immigrant women working in three different occupational groups: leather apparel workers, domestic workers and hairdresser. Each section first outlines the market conditions of the industries these occupations were related to and gives the characteristics of the firms or clients that these women were working for. Then it focuses on immigrant women's reasons for informal work. Finally, it concentrates on the informal work experiences of immigrant women in each occupational group.

5.1 LEATHER APPAREL WORKERS

5.1.1 Demand in the labour market

5.1.1.a Characteristics of the leather apparel industry

The leather apparel industry is part of the garment industry which produces men's, women's and children's leather garments including coats, jackets, skirts and gloves. The leather apparel industry in Canada is often cited as an example of a declining industry (Seward and Tremblay, 1989). The industry's product markets are very unstable due to international competition from newly industrialised countries. Furthermore, the business is seasonal in this industry as there is more demand for leather garments during winter. The business usually picks up during the winter months and slows down during summer.

As in all other segments of the garment industry, the work in leather apparel industry is labour intensive. Most of the leather apparel manufacturers are located in large urban centres like Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg where they are close to the markets and pools of unskilled labour. According to Industry, Science and Technology Canada's (1988) industry profile report, the leather apparel industry employed 1500 people. However, this number does not include the informal workers in this industry.

5.1.1.b Firms in the industry

The firms in the leather apparel industry are small size firms which operate with low technology levels (Industry, Science and Technology Canada, 1988). The Montreal leather apparel firms, where my respondents worked, typically employed between 10 to 30 workers. Most of these leather apparel factories had a small retail shop in front of the factory. The leather garments manufactured in the factory were sold in these factory owned retail stores. However, the sale of produced leather goods was not limited to these stores. Wholesale production for retail stores across Canada was also engaged in.

Leather apparel factories were usually sweatshops where health and safety regulations were often severely violated:

> **AT:**...the working conditions were very lousy...It [the factory] was just a place we were not used to. Basically it was dirty, there were lots of scraps around. The air was dirty. There was not any airconditioner or vents or stuff like that which made working very difficult.

All of the informal leather apparel workers interviewed worked in small ethnic businesses where the majority of the workers were immigrants. The workers and the owner often belonged to the same ethnic group. Or they belonged to different ethnic groups but spoke the same language.

5.1.1.c The division of labour and the organization of the labour process

There was a simple division of labour in the leather apparel factories. The workers here were not as dependent on each other as workers in an assembly line production.

The raw material (processed leather) was purchased from leather manufacturers. There was one person, a fashion coordinator, who selected leather and garment designs. There were cutters who cut the leather sheets according to the patterns provided. These cutters were considered either skilled or semi-skilled workers. However, all cutters were male because cutting required "male strength".

The cutters, after cutting the leather pieces, passed these on to sewing machine operators who sewed these pre-cut pieces together. Five of the leather apparel workers in this sample were sewing machine operators. Sewing machine operators, like the cutters, were usually skilled or semi-skilled workers. Although hiring of males as sewing machine operators was not an uncommon practice, the majority of the sewing machine operators were female. Sewing machine operators assembled the whole garment (i.e., jacket or coat), and made the interfacing, put in the pockets and sewed the zipper. There were many different styles of jackets and coats. Therefore, this job enabled the sewing machine operators to use their skills as well as their imaginations. Besides, to be able to sew the garment as a whole and see the end product gave them a sense of job satisfaction and pride in their work unlike the immigrant women who worked in assembly line production:

> **FA:** In this job you see your product...This gives you a kind of satisfaction. At least you can say 'I made this'. In garment factory you only sew collars or sleeves. You never get to see the end product and you cannot say I made this. You do the same job over and over again...this is so boring...But in the leather business, there are different styles, different models. You use your talent, your creativity, your imagination. This gives you the satisfaction...sometimes I cannot wait to see the jacket finished...

Although having different styles or patterns created a sense of job satisfaction, sometimes it also became an obstacle to earning more money. There was a fixed piece rate for every jacket sewn regardless of the pattern. Detailed patterns slowed down the pace of the workers:

> NC:...in the third month the piece rates went up to $18. But the jacket models were so hard, I ended up earning less money than I expected to earn...

When the sewing machine operators finished assembling the unlined garment they handed them over to the lining makers. There were three lining makers in my sample. Lining makers were unskilled workers, the majority of which were female. They were usually easily hired and fired in downturn situations.

Sewing machine operators shared a piece rate with lining makers. They had to pay $2-3 of their piece rate to the lining maker on every piece. The nature of this arrangement left the lining makers at the mercy of the sewing machine operators in slack times. The piece rates fluctuated a lot with the changes in the competitive markets. In April 1990, when I interviewed the leather apparel industry workers, the piece rate for the sewing machine operators varied between $15-$18. However, I was told that these rates were very low compared to the previous year's rates. Although piece rates were very much firm specific, I was told that a year ago some firms paid as high as $27 per piece. Within the past year the piece rates declined drastically. This situation had a negative impact on the jobs of the lining makers. Most of them lost their jobs because with the decline in the piece rates sewing machine operators started to sew the linings as well.

> **FA:** In the place I am working right now I am paid $18 per piece. I am sewing the whole jacket including the linings. Previously lining makers were sewing the linings... But now as the piece rates are very low we sew them as well...Because if we pay another $2-3 for the lining makers that leaves us with only $15 per piece, which is very low.

The final step in the production of a leather jacket or coat, after the lining, was the pressing and the placement of the fastening snaps. These were the duties of pressers and snappers. Like the lining makers, the majority of the pressers and snappers were unskilled workers. However, the snappers and pressers were all male.

The majority of the firms in the leather apparel industry used a piece work system. This type of system created worker control over the production process. It gave the workers the incentive to work faster and to produce more, because a faster pace and a higher quantity of produced goods meant more income. This way the workers controlled their own pace of work as well as their earnings.

Piece work also eliminated external control. The employer did not have to hire extra people to control the other workers. Eventhough there was no one controlling the work pace of the other workers, a supervisory position still existed. The supervisor was a sewing machine operator her/himself who also worked on a piece rate basis. The supervisor helped the workers when they experienced difficulties in figuring out the details of the patterns or other technical problems. A supervisory fee ($5-6) was paid by the sewing machine operators who sought help. **ZT** was the only woman in the sample who held a supervisory position:

> **ZT:** Sometimes the workers ask questions about the models or how to bring the pieces together, stuff like that..We show the way of doing things. We get an extra $5-6 for the pieces we supervise.

5.1.1.d Employer's labour force strategies

The instability of the product markets in the leather apparel industry due to international competition and the seasonal nature of the industry forced employers to adopt certain labour force strategies (i.e., having more control over the workers and the labour costs, little investment in new technologies or improvements in the factory). Employers of the firms operating with limited circulating capital always sought to save on overhead costs.

Flexibility (Atkinson, 1984) is required by the employers in the leather apparel industry like all other employers who compete in unstable product markets. The flexibility to vary the size of the workforce and the amount of work hours in response to cyclical or structural variations in demand is crucial. Similarly, it is also important to have flexibility to adjust the wage levels according to the prevailing market conditions and the mobilization of workers to perform a variety of tasks in the factory.

Informality (hiring informal workers and going-off-the books) provides these employers with the flexibility to survive the unstable market conditions. Informality also enables these firms to flagrantly violate the labour laws by making workers work for long hours and without any benefits. Furthermore, it allows them to evade taxes by showing their income levels lower than what they actually are.

Several respondents in the sample claimed that informality was very common among the leather apparel industry employers in Montreal.

> **AT:** I don't think there is many businesses that operated honestly in Montreal personally speaking. Because they are not big enough. Everyone and everybody is doing it. They don't give out receipts, they bring in extra leather, they produce so much stuff, you name it. They pay cash [to the employees], so they don't have to pay anything to the government...

The seasonal nature of the leather apparel industry required the small size firms within the industry to increase their market shares and profit margins by producing over capacity in high seasons. Informality enabled the employers to have production over capacity.

AT explained that the employers engaged in informality at two levels. First, they purchased extra raw material (leather) above their production capacity without declaring it in the books. Second, they employed informal labour to transform these raw materials into finished products.

Once the extra unregistered raw material was purchased, as **AT** explained, "..[the employer] needed someone to sew them for free!"; that is, the employer needed people to sew leather goods without being formally accounted for on the books. Having formal employees to sew the unregistered material would create problems in balancing the books. Thus, employers either hired a totally invisible labour force (which will be called informal workers) or encouraged their workers to do 'a bit on the side'[8] (these will be called semi-informal workers). Among the invisible work force there were workers who worked on the employers' premises as well as those who worked at home (i.e., home workers). Many of the respondents reported that their employers subcontracted work to homeworkers in high season.

The workers who only worked informally were not seen on the books. These workers were paid wages in cash according to the on-going piece rate determined in the competitive market. Informal workers had no job security or other employment benefits such as retirement pension plan, unemployment insurance, paid holidays, sick leave or maternity leave. They were usually the first ones to be fired in crisis situations.

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[8] The term 'a bit on the side' is taken from Jenkins and Harding, 1989.

The workers who worked 'a bit on the side' were paid partly in cash, and partly by cheque. **ME**, who was paid this way (which will be called 'half and half' method) explained the method of payment:

> **ME:** Actually I get paid on piece rate basis, but the employer shows it as hourly-rate on the paper. So I get the cheque part on hourly basis and get the difference between piece-rate and hourly rate in cash.

The informal work situations created another segmentation within the secondary labour market along formality and informality lines. The formal employees (including the ones who did 'a bit on the side) had more job security and job benefits compared to those who worked only informally.

The employers also adopted different strategies of dealing with employees when informality was involved. Informal work situations created a different form of employer-employee relationships. Employers refrained from possible confrontations with informal employees and distanced themselves from them. This is probably in part due to the secrecy needed or desired due to the illegal nature of the activity. Hiring informal workers created concerns about being discovered by the state. The employers thus stood to lose more in this situation than the individual employees. They face the risk of criminal charges and loss of their business licences.

One way confrontation was avoided was through piece work. This created the illusion for workers that they controlled their pace of work and their wages and were therefore their own bosses (Gannage, 1986:122). Consequently they did not blame the employer for low wages.

Furthermore, employers had only indirect involvement in hiring and firing practices. Employers did not advertise informal jobs in the newspapers to recruit the informal work force. Informal workers were found through informal networks. Usually workers who already worked in the factory advised friends, relatives, acquaintances and/or individuals of the same ethnic group regarding an opening. Furthermore, sometimes even firing practices were carried out by individual workers. For example, I quoted **FA**, the sewing machine operator, earlier who sewed the linings of the jackets as well. When the piece rates went down the sewing machine operator did not want to lower her piece rate wage by paying another extra $2-3 to the lining maker. Instead she sewed the linings herself. In this example, we have a situation where one worker ended the job of another co-worker. The employer was not involved. In this way the employer avoided possible confrontations with employees by leaving them alone to solve their problems among themselves.

All in all, the nature of the leather apparel industry has given rise to forms of work organization and employment strategies which in turn created a demand for informal workers who are docile, easy to hire and fire and willing to work for long hours without complaint. Some workers in the labour market are very suitable for these kind of firms due to their low levels of labour market credentials (i.e., education, knowledge of language, work experience, skills).

Now we move on from the nature of leather apparel industry firms and strategies of the employers to the characteristics of the leather apparel workers and their personal motivations for informal work.

5.1.2 Characteristics of the Leather Apparel Workers

The majority of the leather apparel industry workers in the sample were refugee claimants (7 out of 8) who had been in Canada for less than five years. The mean age of these workers was 26 years. All of them were married and all but one had children. Among those with children six had pre-school age children.

Half of the leather apparel workers only had Grade 5 education. Three had high school and one had college education. Only two of the respondents had a good command of either of the two official languages (English or French).

Only half of the leather apparel workers had sewing skills before they started working in the garment industry. These women who had skills all worked as sewing machine operators. The rest of the workers acquired sewing skills on the job. Only one of these unskilled women managed to work as a sewing machine operator, while others all worked as lining makers.

The majority of the leather apparel workers' husbands also worked in marginal jobs. There were two men who worked with their wives as sewing machine operators.

5.1.3 Motivations for Informal Work

The main motivation for informal work among the leather apparel industry workers was "to earn more money" or "to make fast cash money". Those workers who were refugee claimants were most in need of more money or fast cash money because of their very uncertain future. Since their refugee claims were still being processed when the interviews were done, many stated that they wanted to save as much money as possible while they were still in Canada:

> **ZT**:We have to save money because we still do not know whether we are going to stay here or go back home..If we go back home, we do not have anything left there. We have to start a living from scratch...If we stay here on the other hand, we again need some money...If we stay here we will probably open a small business..maybe a leather factory.

Like **ZT** many of the immigrants sold all of their belongings (i.e., lands, houses, even jewelry) before departing for Canada. For these women going back to their home countries would mean starting all over again with nothing. Extra money saved in Canada would allow them to begin a new life back home. If they stayed in Canada, savings would still be of benefit to them. Money would allow them to purchase a car or open a small business, thus fulfilling their dreams of economic success. Therefore, economic motive was very strong for informal work among these individuals.

Many of the leather apparel industry workers previously had worked in places like quilt or mirror factories or various garment factories which are typical secondary segment jobs. The majority of them worked on an hourly basis receiving on the average $4.55 an hour.

> **ME:**I started working in a quilt factory with an hourly wage $4.55. I worked there for a year and a half. I was paid $5 an hour when I quit the job.

Many of the respondents, like **ME**, had very few wage increases over the months or years of formal work in those factories. When they worked on an hourly basis receiving $4.55-5 an hour, their formal income averaged between $750-900 a month. All the women in the sample felt that these wages were very low. However, as long as they worked formally, these were the best possible wages they could earn with their available labour market credentials.

All of the leather apparel workers had heard about the attractive working conditions (piece work, long hours of work) and cash payments in the leather apparel industry from their friends and they wanted to try it.

> **OM:** I had friends working in the leather factory and they made very good money, that's why I wanted to learn the leather business.

The leather apparel industry paid well because the work system was based on piece-rate work. The piece rates were high when compared to the piece rates in other subsegments of the garment industry. More importantly, the leather apparel industry allowed informal work which meant tax free cash income as well as longer working hours:

> **OM:** Here we get more money than anywhere else we can get...

The piece rates in the leather industry were high because leather is a material which is harder to process as opposed to cloth material. It is harder and more time consuming to sew leather material. The other reason is, the piece rate was paid to the sewing machine operator upon sewing the whole garment rather than just sewing one piece (i.e., sleeve or collar) of the garment.

Many of the respondents preferred piece work to hourly work because they could make more money:

> **OM:** ...Nobody likes hourly rate. Piece rate is better, that is why I decided to work in the leather businesss...

Piece rate work gave the workers an incentive to work. It also gave them a sense of control over their wages and pace of work. However, piece work also meant long and irregular hours of work.

> **AT:** We worked minimum ten hours a day, six days a week and we worked 12 to 13 hours on Thursdays and Fridays...We only had Sundays off..It is really heavy work, it is not by any means easy...because we worked piece work. It was like either you made it that day or you did not make it that day. There was no calling sick, because if you called sick you knew that you are not going to be paid that day...

> **FA:** We used to work longer hours as well as on the weekends. But now we only work for 8-9 hours a day. Previously we used to work from 9am till 10 pm (13 hours) with just half an hour lunch break.

However, none of the respondents complained about working long hours. Although they stated that the work was extremely tiring, they accepted this situation.

> **ME:** It is tiring but I do not have other choice. If you work somewhere else you will not get more than $5.50 an hour. Besides they will not allow you to work overtime and you will pay half of what you earn to taxes...in this job we work hard but we make a good deal of money.

Tax-free income was the most appealing side of the informal leather work for these women, for they were able to actually earn more in "real" money terms. Some of the leather apparel workers admitted that they deliberately evaded taxes to make more money. By working informally and evading taxes, the majority earned two or three times more than they would have in a formal job. For example, a sewing machine operator who was paid $18 per piece and sewed 10 jackets a day earned approximately $3600 a month. A lining maker on the other hand who was paid $3 per piece and sewed 30 linings a day made $1800 a month cash. Given the labour market credentials of these women (i.e., education, skills, work experience and knowledge of language) it would be almost impossible for them to earn this much money in a formal job.

Informal work also allowed some women .to collect unemployment insurance while they worked. Some of the women worked informally for a while (i.e., six months or one year) and collected unemployment insurance at the same time. When their insurance term ended they went back to formal or semi-informal work to become eligible for unemployment insurance again. They used this as a shield against the instability of their jobs. There was only one woman who collected unemployment insurance while working in the leather apparel factory at the time of the interviews. However, there were also other women who reported doing the same.

According to the respondents the biggest disadvantage of the informal work was that it had no benefits and no job security.

> **FT:** You do not have any guarantee, you have nothing. You can be out of work tomorrow, but you cannot apply for unemployment insurance benefit. If you get sick or disabled you can not claim any disability pension...

Some of the respondents protected themselves against this disadvantage of informal work by working the 'half and half' method explained earlier (see the section on employer's labour force strategies).

> **FA:** This way I both avoid taxes...because as your income goes up the amount of taxes you have to pay goes up as well...and I can be eligible for unemployment insurance in case if I am unemployed...

Among the respondents four women preferred this method of payment.

Although informal work appealed to all the workers in the short run, none of them wanted to work like this for very long. The majority of the refugee claimants planned to go back to formal work when granted a landed immigrant status. This is because they did not have a guarantee for the future as long as they worked informally:

> **FA:** ...if we stay here [permanently]..I will definitely go back to formal work in a factory. I work informally now because we need money..we do not know whether we will be here tomorrow or not..if we stay here I will work formally because when you work like this you don't have a future guarantee. No retirement, no regular income..At least if I work formally in a factory, I will have a regular income and nobody would kick me out of the job easily and I can retire when I am old...

Two of the leather apparel industry workers had already returned to formal work when I interviewed them. They both did so to have job security:

> **NC**:...I work formally now. I am quite happy with it. I am unionized. I have medical coverage which includes eye and dental care. Here I make 300 linings a day, I work really hard and paid $5 an hour. If I worked in the leather business like this I would have been paid more, but I have guarantee here...

Many of the workers in the leather apparel industry complained about the crises that the industry was going through. They described how the unemployment rates were very high in the industry and the piece rates were low.

> **FA**:..For the last 6-7 months the business is extremely slow. They either lay you off as there is no job, or you quit because the piece rates are so low.. Everybody changes places all the time, but finding a better paying job is getting harder and harder everyday...We used to get enormous piece-rates when I first started this business. We were paid $24-25 per piece...but now you thank your God if you can get $18 per piece. We used to change a lot of places in the past. If we did not like the piece rate that is it, we would go to another place which paid better. But no more, nobody pays well any more. Nowadays you are lucky if you find a job in this business...

FA stated that she would quit working in the leather apparel industry if the piece rates dropped any lower because "it does not make sense to spend energy for getting peanuts."

As we have seen, earning more money than they can by working formally or making fast cash was the main motive behind these women's informal work. All the women interviewed tolerated the arduous working conditions in the leather apparel industry just to earn and save some more money for some form of economic security. Their immigration statuses were an important factor pushing these women into work informally. The uncertainties of their future motivated these women to make more money by evading taxes. However, they were all willing to work formally and pay their taxes to secure their future if they were granted landed immigrant status in Canada.

5.2 DOMESTIC CLEANERS

5.2.1 Demand for Domestic Cleaners

Demand for domestic help (i.e., cleaning services) increased remarkably as women's participation in the paid labour force increased. For working women with families, hiring another woman to help with the domestic duties is a much easier alternative than the reorganization of the household division of labour (Gimenez, 1990). However, in North America professional or career-oriented women (who are usually middle and upper middle class) are more likely to afford hiring domestic help while most working class women still manage with little or no extra help (Gimenez, 1990:41-42).

Domestic or cleaning services are provided by self-employed individuals (i.e., cleaning ladies) as well as by private maid-service companies in Canada. While private maid-companies are formal businesses and listed in phonebooks, self-employed cleaning ladies are more likely to be informal workers who do not have any listings. Individual usually find and recruit these informal workers through informal networks.

According to one of the cleaning ladies in my sample individuals prefer self-employed informal domestic workers to formal private maid-companies. This is mainly because, self-employed domestic workers do a better and more detailed job than maid companies. Informal domestic workers do not have any written job descriptions and usually do whatever the clients ask them to do. Private maid companies on the contrary have written job descriptions and as **EK** explains they work in teams and do only the jobs included in their job description:

> **EK:** Maid service people usually work in teams, 4-5 people together. They come in and they stay no longer than one hour. They classify the housework into three groups: light, medium and heavy housework. In the light one, they do not even wipe the fingerprints off the windows. In medium they dust the baseboards, etc. Anything that needs scrubbing is heavy housework.

Furthermore, informal domestic workers are more dependable because the individuals usually recruit these workers upon recommendation from their friends or acquaintances. Informal domestic workers also have more flexible work schedules. For example if a client requires help more than one day in some weeks, the informal domestic workers find a way to squeeze in and fulfil the need of the client.

Another reason which makes informal domestic workers favourable over formal domestic help is, clients do not want to be bothered with paying pension plan or unemployment insurance on behalf of the domestic worker. Many of the clients, especially the elderly people as **EK** asserted, did not even want to be bothered with writing cheques. Cash payment was the easiest way for the clients.

5.2.2 Background Characteristics of Domestic Workers

Two out of three cleaning ladies in the sample came to Canada as refugees more than five years ago. However, neither of the women possessed good English language skills. I managed to interview one woman without the aid of an interpreter; however the second one did not speak a word of English so I interviewed her through an interpreter. The third cleaning lady was a landed immigrant who had been in Canada for 29 years and spoke English very fluently.

The mean age of the cleaning ladies in the sample was 41. They were on the average older than other informal workers in the sample. Two of them were married and the third was separated. They all had children. Only two women had children at school age. The children of the third one were all adults.

All three women had high school education. One of them was trained as an agricultural technician. This women also had some sewing skills but she never thought of working as a seamstress. The other two had no skills other than their basic skills associated with women, like cleaning.

As mentioned earlier, one of the women was separated and was living on social assistance, in a welfare housing area. She also received some help from her husband for her 4 children:

> **JC:**He sends money but not directly..Government gets the money from him and adds it on to my welfare cheque. Including the money that comes from my husband I get around $1100 a month.

The other two women lived with their husbands. One of these women married a second time. Both women's husbands held skilled jobs (i.e., electrician and carpenter).

5.2.3 Motivations for Informal Work

Two of the cleaning ladies in the sample reported that the need for a second or extra income was the main motive for their informal domestic/cleaning work. One woman, in contrast, said she was not in this business for money only but also for self fulfilment.

All the domestic cleaners in the sample chose cleaning as an occupation because this was the only available job they could do. Some of these women could not speak the English language and all of them lacked work experience and any other marketable skills.

JC, was the only cleaning lady who did this job on a irregular basis. She was on welfare assistance, she did not think of working formally. She asserted that she preferred getting welfare assistance and working informally on an irregular basis because this money would always be more than what she would earn by working formally outside the home. Besides, her family responsibilities as a single mother restrained her from regular full-time work. **JC** cleaned houses informally only when she and her family needed some extra money. When I interviewed her she was only working once in every other week because her mother was visiting them from her home country. They needed the extra income during her stay in Canada. As **JC** worked only for a short period of time she never considered cleaning as a real job and she never considered doing it on a fulltime basis.

Unlike **JC**, **KV** and **EK** worked on a more regular basis.

> **KV:** I wanted to work as a cleaning lady in order to bring a second income to the family. My husband's income is enough but having a second income provides us more room in our spendings. We just bought a house. We couldn't have done this with one income, or it would take longer...Besides I am not a type of person who would sit home all day long. My kids are at school during the day, they do not need me around anymore.

EK's reason for informal work was not merely economic. She wanted to work formally, but her ex-husband was very jealous, in the beginning, he did not let her work outside the home. He thought she would have an affair with the men at work if she worked in a regular formal job. He rather wanted **EK** to stay at home and raise her children:

> **EK:** I filled out an application for the Blue Cross Hospital. A friend of mine down the street, she worked there and she said "I'll get you in there". At that time hiring was not a problem. I remember the fight that followed when I told my ex-husband that I had applied to that job and probably would be accepted. He was immensely jealous and he told that the office manager was just probably a skirt chaser and that was how I probably would be evaluated. I can not ever understand his way of thinking in that line..So I didn't take that job...Once he even implied that I would have an affair with the guy I work for.

However, **EK** was a very outgoing person; she liked meeting new people, learning new things, therefore, she realised that she would not be happy staying at home. More importantly, she wanted to be economically independent of her husband. Thus, she decided to be an Avon lady first. Her husband did not object to this because she only had to deal with women. Although she did not earn much money through this job, she worked as an Avon lady and met a lot of people. However, she realized that she had to earn more money, because her husband was not giving her enough to spend on herself and children. When she decided to do another job to earn more money her friend suggested her to clean her house. This way she decided to be a domestic cleaner.

> **EK:** Well, I was born to be a housewife. You know I was a housewife and a mother. Basically the things I know to do best...but I like doing them and I thought people would like my way of doing them as well...Well, it is basically a part of becoming independent as well. I was very dependent on my ex-husband, he didn't give me much money. This is a typical [country name] way to handle their wives and their families. Men are the providers, they didn't want their wives to work. They didn't want their wives to think either. Maybe we weren't compatible at all. I'd like to read, I'd like to express my feelings. He didn't like this..and then I didn't want his money. ...I started working as an Avon lady and met the most interesting people...I did babysitting...These gave me a little bit of independence, a little freedom...Then I started cleaning. I had a friend who was alcoholic...she needed someone to clean her house. She would pick me up in the morning without my ex-husband's knowledge. He knew that I spent the day with her but he did not know that I worked for her. She paid me I think $3 per hour then...This gave me a little boost and I put up an ad in the paper 15 years ago. Mrs. A [one of the clients] replied to my ad and I started working there...In the beginning my ex-husband did not know this. He labelled it [cleaning] as the most demeaning job on the earth. Well, I have been cleaning toilets prior to that. What is demeaning in it...He was very upset when he learnt that I was working as a cleaning lady.

None of the cleaning ladies perceived themselves as doing something illegal or evading taxes.

> **KV:** I am not registered anywhere. Who would know, who could control if I pay my taxes or not. They cannot come after me. I would deny it. Besides this state

would not collapse if it misses my tax.

EK was the only one who was registered. She owned a small cleaning company.

> **EK:** After I have got divorced I started a little cleaning company. I was single by then..I hoped I would be able to hire some people. I had two friends who were helping me but it just didn't work out. The clients I have sent them they did not say that they wanted them back. I still have the company. It enables me to write some expenses of the house...or the expenses I make for the clients..for instance I buy cleaning rags, a lot of women, it is very surprising, it does not matter how rich or poor they are they give you old panties or stockings to dust with. I bring my own you know and I can write that as a cleaning expense. If I pay $1.98 I write $1.98 as expense, which is nice and it makes clients happy too. And it is perfectly legal.

However, she filed income tax return only for some part of her income:

> **EK:** I file an income tax on everything I get in cheque, but I do not report the money I get in cash....I pay very little tax because a lot of my income is cash. A lot of people pay me cash because they do not want to pay anything else. They do not want to pay any pension plan or unemployment insurance on my behalf. So they pay me under the table basically. The older people I work for even do not want to be bothered with writing cheques and they do not want to pay GST or anything. Actually, I do not charge GST...

KV and **JC** got their payments either in cash or by personal cheques from the clients. They did not report any of their earnings.

5.2.4 Working Conditions and Relationships with the Clients

All three women worked for middle, upper middle or upper class families (i.e., doctors, lawyers, psychologists, chiropractors, university professors). They either found these jobs through their friends or through clients (one client recomended them to the next). **EK** mentioned that there is a big demand for self employed cleaning ladies in the market.

> **EK:**...in my cleaning business I can have more jobs than I want. I have a long waiting list...I tell them [the people who ask her to work for them] I can't come but I say I can only put you on the waiting list, but it might take half a year, so you go ahead and find someone else.

Both **EK** and **KV** clean every single day of the week except for Sundays. They both cleaned more than one house on some days of the week.

> **KV:**It takes longer to clean large houses. When the houses are small I clean two houses a day. If the house is small and there is only the basic cleaning job I finish it in 3.5-4 hours and combine this with some place else but if the house is large it takes me all day long to clean it...

For all three women the duties of the job included the basic household cleaning (i.e., dusting, vacuuming, washing the floors etc.) and ironing. However, **EK** did a little bit more than this.

> **EK**:..I do everything you know.If Mrs. A [one of her clients] needs her hair trimmed I trim it for her. I do the ironing, I put up the Christmas lights. You know the lady says "I can never get my husband to do this"...All these professionals are not very good house husbands. They are very good husbands on a personal level but when it comes to help with the housework most of them do not. So I do it..

The wages of the cleaning ladies are determined in the market. All of them knew about the on going rates and arranged their wages according to these market prices. They followed the on-going rates either from the ads in the newspapers or from other domestic cleaners.

> **EK**:...[U]sually every two years on the first of January I ask for an extra 50 cents an hour. I used to do that every year but some might not keep up with it. But if the bus rates go up I am very strict with it. If the bus fare goes up [clients] read it in the paper and they adjust it accordingly.

While adjusting their wages, domestic cleaners also use their discretion for some people. They charge less money from those clients who go through a divorce, or who are elderly or student.

Knowledge of language and length of time worked for the client were important in domestic cleaners' relationships with their clients. Those women who spoke better English had more interactions with the clients. Furthermore, those who worked for a client for a long period of time develop more intimate relationships with the client and they almost become a part of the client's family.

> **EK:** You just become part of the family. There are so many places I work, they are like second home to me...My relationship with my clients are very personal. I see them when they are up and when they are down. We talk a lot, share a lot...I see their children growing...

Domestic work provided these women with the freedom to choose their clients as well. Two of the workers interviewed very frankly asserted that they just quit the job if they did not like the client or found the job over tiring.

None of these domestic cleaners had any special skills that could be offered in the labour market. In other words, lack of necessary labour market credentials forced these women into cleaning jobs. Among the cleaning ladies interviewed (n=3) the highest educational degree obtained was a high school diploma. Two of the cleaning ladies had very poor English language skills. Although the major motive for informal work was economic in all cases, in one case informal work was an attempt to escape from the patriarchal control of the husband.

5.3 HAIRDRESSER

The only hairdresser in the sample was a nineteen-year-old girl, **SA**. **SA** came to Canada in 1982 when she was thirteen years old. After her father's death, **SA**'s elder brother, who had already been living in Canada, sponsored **SA**, her younger brother and mother to come to Canada.

SA started to school as soon as she arrived in Canada. The school system placed her in Grade 6 instead of Grade 9 with her age mates, as she did not speak a word of English. Studying with children three years younger than her and in another language created serious adaptation problems for **SA**. In addition, she also experienced racial discrimination from the students. For these reasons **SA** dropped out of school:

> **SA:**The students did not like me because I was a foreigner. One time I can never forget...There was this guy, J. He came over to me with a knife and said "Do you know what is it today?".."Today is thanksgiving and I am going to kill you"..I was terrified and there was nobody around because it was after 5 o'clock. I stayed after school because my maths teacher was helping me with my assignments and maths classes after school. My mathematics was not very good. [The teacher] left, and I was going to leave too. I was cleaning my locker and he appeared in front of me. He was drunk. I also knew that he was doing drugs. He said "I hate you Paki". I told him I was not a Paki. He said "It does not matter your skin is dark". When I felt that he was serious I ran to the girl's washroom. He followed me to the washroom, but he ran away when he saw the cleaning lady there..."

After this incident **SA** got psychological counselling, but did not return to school again:

> **SA:**I did not want to go back to school after that incident. I had a nervous breakdown. They sent me to a counsellor. He told me to have a break or a vacation. I sat in class but my mind was somewhere else. All my grades went down. I completed Grade 8

> but never went to Grade 9...They apologized from me over and over again. They sent letters, they phoned...[However] I will never ever go back to school again. I would rather die but I won't go...I do not want to live the same thing again.

5.3.1 Reason for informal work

When **SA** dropped of the school she started working with her brother. Her brother had a small family business - a hairdressing salon, where he worked with his wife. He was a hairdresser and his wife was a manicurist. They also employed part-time help. When **SA** decided to stop going to school her brother gave her a job in the salon.

SA had considerable experience in the hairdressing business. She worked in hairdressing salons since she was 9. While she was in her home country, she used to work for her other elder brother, who is also a hairdresser, in summer holidays. She used to shampoo hair and hold the blow drier. She relied on these learned skills to work in her brother's shop in Edmonton while she was still attending school. She used to work on the weekends and after school as a shampooer.

When she decided to drop out of school, her brother recruited her to work in his salon because he needed the help. He could trust **SA**; she was one of the family. She would be loyal to him and willing to work for him no matter how much he paid her. Her mother and other family members were happy with this arrangement too, because **SA** would be under her brother's control. They did not insist that she return to school because for them acquiring a skill was more important than graduating from high school, especially for a girl. Education was not considered important for a girl because girls were expected to get married one day and become dependent upon their husbands. If **SA** needed to work one day, she could work as a hairdresser. She could learn this trade through the family business and be of use to her brother in the meantime.

However, **SA** could not work formally because she did not have a licence to be a hairdresser. In order to get a licence she either had to attend apprenticeship classes or write the apprenticeship exam. She was neither eligible for taking the classes nor writing the exam, as she did not have a Grade 10 education. Therefore she worked informally.

Her brother trained her as a hairdresser. He taught her all the basics of the trade (i.e., to cut, perm and dye hair, etc.). He then fired the help he had previously employed to save money.

5.3.2 Work experience

SA worked as unpaid family labour for a while and this did not bother her much.

> **SA:**...I have not been paid anything until last year. My mother, my younger brother and I we all live with my [hairdresser] brother and his family [his wife and three children]. As we stayed in his house I did not ask him to pay me. He provides us food, he gives us shelter...Still the main reason is, until last year

> we sent money to my sisters back home. They both were going through some kind of financial hardship. I did not get any money [from my brother] to be able to send some money to them. I have a responsibility to my family. I said to myself I will help my family until I get married. Because, once I get married it is my husband's responsibility to take care of me... But last summer my brother started to pay some money to me.

Her brother has just recently started paying her when the interview was done. She earned around $2200 a month, cash.

> **SA:** I make business worth around $3500 a month. My brother pays me $2000...with the tips sometimes I earn around $2500. I cut more hair than my brother cuts. The clients like me because I am young and I like talking. My brother does not talk very much. Besides, my English is much better than my brother's.

SA worked eight hours a day and five days a week. Sundays the salon was closed and she also took Tuesdays off. She liked her job a lot. She liked her customers and she did not have any problem working with her brother.

When I asked whether she would consider opening her own salon one day or not she said:

> **SA:** Oh, my brother would be very upset about that. Because, the customers come to me. I have more customers than my brother has. Besides, I do not only cut hair. I also sell shampoos and other beauty products. Sometimes I sell products which amount to $100-150. My brother can not do this alone.

She has never considered getting her licence as well. When I reminded her that she did not have a future guarantee and she said:

> **SA**:I don't care..My brother would never fire me. As far as the pension plan is concerned, I hope I will not stay at long in Canada.

SA was still very bitter about the way she was treated at school. The incident (see p. 47) she lived through changed all her views about Canada and Canadians. Although her good relationship with the Canadian customers had a positive impact, it was not enough to change her view about this country:

> **SA**:I am not going to stay [in Canada] long...It is funny, while coming here I was dreaming about going to school here..I was going to go the university and stuff like that.. I have never thought that I would be a hairdresser one day.

In summary, we can say that both racism in the society and ethnic traditional values were influential in **SA**'s decision to work informally. She decided to drop out of school when she was in Grade 8 because of the racist attitudes of some of her school mates. The traditional values rooted in her ethnic culture were consequential on her family's decisions regarding **SA**'s future plans and their ability to shape her mind. For example, her family did not encourage her to return to school but rather they explicitly advised her that education is not important for a girl. Thus, for her family she had to seek more of acquisition of specific skills such as hairdressing than spending time in useless high school classes.

Availability of job opportunities at her brother's hairdressing salon was a significant factor easing **SA**'s transition from school to informal work. **SA**'s brother depended on **SA** because she was loyal to him, she was one of the family and she could be recruited as an unpaid family labour whenever it was needed. **SA** was also dependent on her brother because she could only work in his shop as a hairdresser as she did not have a licence to be one.

CHAPTER 6

INFORMAL WORK INSIDE THE HOME

This chapter focuses on the work experiences of home-based informal workers and their reasons for informal work. Two occupations, babysitters and seamstresses will be studied.

6.1 BABYSITTERS

6.1.1 Demand in the market

Over the past thirty years there has been a tremendous growth in the number of women participating in the labour force (Boyd, 1984) including those with young children. In 1989, 57% of the married women at work had children under age six (Parliament, 1989). The participation of women with young children in the labour force creates a demand for childcare. In Canada childcare is delivered in a variety of forms: there are licensed group day care centres (government run, nonprofit - parent, employer or community run - or commercial), unsupervised private in-home care (i.e. live in nannies, sitters coming to parents' home), private care givers caring for children in their own houses (both registered/formal or informal) and finally there is care by relatives (Task Force on Child Care, 1986:50-51).

Studies show that private care at the caregiver's home is the most prevalent form of childcare in Canada. Although most of the provinces require some type of licensing or supervision for family day care arrangements, in 1979 it was estimated that less than 2% of the children were in supervised family care (Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1982). Most studies indicate that informal child care is used by 80% of children in care (Task Force on Child Care, 1986:154)

Steven (1984), Pelletier (1983), Lero (1981), Johnson (1977) show that child's age, proximity of care, availability, quality and cost are factors considered by the parents when choosing care for their children. Most parents prefer babysitters because they favour a home-like environment for their young children particularly for those under two. Children under the age of two need more intimate attention rather than socialization. This intimate attention is very hard to obtain in a group day care arrangement. Availability is another important factor. Supervised spaces are minimal, most of the day cares have long waiting lists. In most provinces supervised spaces are available for less than 10% of the preschool population needing alternative care. Besides, many day care centres have prohibitive age limits (two years of age and toilet trained are common criteria) (Task Force on Child Care 1986:166). Access to care within a reasonable distance from home and work is also important to both parents and the children. If the care is in a convenient place it reduces the travel-induced stress for both the parents and the children and it also ensures the child is dropped off and picked up at designated times (Ibid). Finally, the informal child care at care givers' home is usually more affordable than other types of day care arrangements (i.e. group day cares, registered babysitters and in-home care givers). Costs of day care centres are high for any parent even slightly outside the subsidy range ($19,000 annually). Fees charged by informal babysitters are lower to compensate for the fact that they do not provide any receipts. Flexibility was another factor affecting the decisions of the parents. Informal babysitters are more flexible in terms of working hours. They do not have strict rules or fines for those parents who are late to bring in or pick up their children. This is one advantage of informal babysitters which is particularly looked for by people who work shifts or have irregular work hours.

The majority of the babysitters interviewed for this study were talked into this business by their friends or neighbours. However, some were also aware of the demand for babysitters and consciously made their decision to babysit:

> **NA:** I was at home all day long with my son. My son was bored playing with me all the time. I asked myself why don't I find some children to babysit. I knew that I could find clients easily because it is very hard to find a trustable, honest babysitter. I experienced that while I was raising my own children. Sometimes you want to go somewhere. If you do not have relatives to whom you can leave your children you cannot trust everyone. I knew that there is a lot of demand for babysitters. One

> day my son's friend's mother from the day school asked me if I could babysit her son. That's how I started babysitting.

6.1.2 Background characteristics of the babysitters and their motivations for informal work

Half of the six babysitters interviewed lived in Montreal and the other half lived in Edmonton. All of those who lived in Edmonton were landed immigrants while the ones who lived in Montreal were all refugee claimants. All of the landed immigrants lived in Canada for ten or more years. The refugee claimants on the other hand had been in Canada for less than five years.

The mean age of the informal babysitters was 33 years. The majority of them were married. There was only one woman who was separated. All of them had children. Only three of them had children under six years of age.

The education levels of the babysitters showed a great variety. Among them one woman had no schooling, two had Grade 5 education, one had Grade 9 education, two had high school education and one had university education. The majority of these women had no skills other than house keeping and child caring.

None of the three babysitters in Edmonton had formal work experience. None of these women worked in a job outside the home. The main reason why these women have never worked outside the home was their family responsibilities. All three women had more than one child.

> **GS:** My husband works out of town. He comes to Edmonton on the weekends...Everything related to the house and the kids are on my shoulders. The kids are grown now but still somebody has to stay at home and control them...take them to school in the morning, pick them up in the afternoon...

> **UB:** Our children were young when we first came to Canada. I had to stay at home with them until they started to school...

GS was also reluctant to work outside the home because she feared that she would not be able to pay the day care expenses given the wage she could earn.

> **GS:** I have three children...if I worked I had to take them to the babysitter. I have Grade 9 education...I have no work experience. If I found a job I don't think my income would be enough to cover the babysitter fees for three children...

Informal babysitting at home appealed to these three women in the first place because it was home based. In this way they could both stay at home to fulfil their family responsibilities and earn some money. However, **UB** and **NA**'s decision to work at home was also influenced by their husbands.

> **NA:** My husband did not want me to work [outside the home]...He said I cannot cope with the stress of the work. He said "if you are going to be happy go ahead and work I would not recommend. These people [Canadians] make you work very hard. The wage you will earn would not be worth it". He told me to open my business. He told me to work if I would be my own boss...Besides he promised my parents that he would not make me work. When you get married the

> first question that they ask to the groom is "Are you going to make your wife work?". Obviously they asked the same question to my husband...We were just married..leaving for a foreign country he said to my parents "Don't worry I will not make her work there. I will provide everything for your daughter. He did not make big bucks here but it was enough to live on, I never had to work. I babysit now but I do it for myself, not that we needed the money...

UB's husband on the other hand thought that "women's place is at home" and never allowed **UB** to work outside the home.

Husband's income and occupational status is an important factor affecting the decision of women staying at home. All three of the women's husbands occupied stable jobs and had secure and well paying incomes. **GS**'s husband was an electrician, **UB**'s husband was a chemical engineer and **NA**'s husband was a mechanical engineer. Non of these women lived through a long term financial difficulty.

Consequently, the motivations of these women for informal work was not out of necessity but more for a pastime or to make some more spending money:

> **UB**:I stay at home all day. The kids are at school. I don't like watching television all day. I wanted to do something useful...I like kids, I decided to babysit...It is a pastime for me and also some extra few bucks...

The babysitters in Montreal, by contrast, had different backgrounds and different motivations for informal work than those of the babysitters in Edmonton. As I mentioned earlier all of these babysitters were refugee claimants. All of them had a formal work experience in Canada. These were mainly low paying, marginal jobs. Two of the babysitters temporarily interrupted their work outside the home in order to be able to stay at home with their young children (in fact one of these women was still pregnant at the time of the interviews). They babysat at home in order to contribute to the family budget while staying at home.

The third babysitter in Montreal was a single mother of five children. She decided to stop working outside the home and get welfare assistance after she separated from her husband:

> **HA:**People advised me to apply to welfare assistance and stay at home. They said "if you work outside you will not make more than $600. Apply to welfare and get $600 without working.

HA did not get any assistance from her husband. If she had to work outside the home she would have to find a babysitter. She had two dependent children. Applying to welfare assistance and staying at home with the children was the most feasible way for her. However, it was also impossible to live on $600 a month with five children. She decided to do informal babysitting at home. First she started babysitting her sister's two children and then she got more children from people who belonged to the same ethnic group as her.

All the babysitters in the sample worked informally in order to earn some extra money while staying at home. These women all had their own reasons for staying at home. Some of them, under the influence of the patriarchal ideology, felt that their family responsibilities were more important than anything else, therefore they should stay at home and raise their children. Yet for some others this ideology was induced by their husbands. There were women in the sample who did not work outside the home because their husband did not feel comfortable or did not allow them to work. There were also some women who preferred to stay at home because they did not believe they had enough credentials to find a job worthwhile to work outside the home.

6.1.3 Working conditions of the informal babysitters

Child care is like piece work. The more children cared for the more money earned. Many of the women in the sample babysat 1-3 children other than their own. There was only one exceptional woman who babysat seven children, including two of her own. Apparently, women who need more money babysat more children.

Although **NA** asserted that she did not needed more money she babysat three children; two on full time, one on part-time basis.

The highest monthly daycare fee reported by the respondents per child was $300, the lowest was $125. The babysitters who charged $300 were all Edmontonians. When I asked these women what was their criteria was for setting a price I got similar responses from all.

> **GS:** I set the price according to daycares. The day cares on the average charge $350 a month. But they get the money for all the holidays and even for the days that your child did not attend. I do not charge any thing for those days. I charge $17 per day. Every year I raise the daily wage $1. For example last year I have got $16 per day, this year I get $17...

NA charged different rates for full-time and part-time care she provides. She charged $300 for full-timers and $200 for part-timers. She earned $800 per month providing full-time care for two children and part-time care for one. Full-timers usually stayed for 9 hours and part-timers for 5 hours.

Very few of the six informal babysitters had regular work hours. **NA** was the only one who had more regular work hours:

> **NA:** I tell parents not to bring their children earlier than 8 am and not to forget to pick them up before 5pm. I only tolerate when the parents are late until 5pm. I get upset if they are later than this, because my family life starts after 5pm.

The babysitters in Montreal had the most irregular working hours. Both the incomes and the regularity of the work hours of the babysitters very much depended on whose children they cared for. The babysitters in Montreal all provided care for the children of their ethnic people. One of the main reasons for this was, they couldn't care for the Canadian children because of the language problem. However, the incomes of the babysitter who provided care for the children of their ethnic people were much lower than the babysitters who looked after Canadian children. Their working hours were also more irregular than the latter. For example, the monthly day care fee of the babysitters in Montreal varied between $125 and $200 per child. This was because these women felt obliged to accommodate their country people by lowering the rates for them. Under these circumstances, some had to care for five children in order to be able make enough money. They made favours at the expense of both their income and time. They worked for longer hours for less:

> **HA:** I have no fixed work hours. It depends on the parents. Parents usually bring the children early in the morning and pick them up sometime late in the afternoon.

HA made an extra $450 a month in addition to her welfare cheque by babysitting. She babysat three children. Two of the children were her sister's. She charged $250 for both. She also got another $200 for her friend's child.

6.2 HOME-BASED SEAMSTRESSES

There were only two seamstresses who worked at home; **GK** and **GY**. Neither of these women worked on a regular basis. Their work very much depended on the availability of the customers and there was not much demand for their work. Neither of these women did informal sewing at home for a living. This kind of work only provided them pin or pocket money.

Both of these seamstresses were landed immigrants who had been in Canada for fifteen or more years. They were both over forty-five years of age, and married with children. Both women's children were all grown.

Neither of these two women were fluent in English although they have stayed in Canada for a long time. The main reason for this is neither of them had proper language training. They worked in garment factories where they did not have the chance to practice and improve their English. Moreover, they only had acquaintance with people in their ethnic community.

They both had high school education with specialization in sewing and embroidering. This was the main reason for both to choose seamstressing as an occupation in Canada. They both worked as seamstresses in their home country too.

Both of the seamstresses' husbands were skilled workers. **GY**'s husband was a welder, and **GK**'s husband was an electrician. However, neither of the husbands worked at the time of the interviews. **GY**'s husband was granted lifetime compensation from the Workman's Compensation Board due to an accident he had several years ago. He had a pretty stable income. **GK**'s husband on the other hand, was unemployed. However, he was on the union list and waiting for a job to come up. This man's job and consequently his income was very unstable. The jobs he found were usually short-term jobs and when the job was over, he had to wait a long time until another job came up. He collected unemployment insurance and at the same time informally delivered pizza in order to provide extra income for the family (see p.17).

6.2.1 Motivations for informal work

As I mentioned earlier, neither of the seamstresses did informal work on a regular basis. They only worked to contribute a few more dollars to the family budget.

GY started informal work almost fifteen years ago, whe she was still working in a garment factory. By then she was working informally on a more regular basis.

> **GY:** I suffered a lot when I was working fulltime..The job was heavy..I worked in a bluejean factory. I came home late in the evenings. We did not have a car. I had to take the bus. Especially after the baby, everything got harder. Work, children, housework...Because my husband worked out of town..I took the baby to the babysitter during the day. Actually I was paying half of my salary to the babysitter. Money was never enough.. So I started sewing at home at nights. I was doing alterations, hemming etc. I also sewed dresses.

GY did not work outside the home anymore. She stopped working in 1986 due to health reasons and never worked outside the home again. She only did informal sewing at home on an irregular basis, once in a while when someone asked her to do alterations or sew a dress. Her clients are her friends, neighbours and acquaintances. She usually charged $7 or $8 for hemming and $60-$70 for a dress depending on the material and style.

> **GY:**Previously, I was earning at least $200-250 a month. Now, I some months make $50 or some months I make nothing. See.. I do not earn a living from this.

GK started informal work very recently, after she was laid off from her job in a garment sweatshop.

> **GK:**I was working in a small factory sewing sweatshirts and sweatpants. But the factory went on to receivership and they laid off all the workers.

She did not look for another job after she was laid off. She was collecting unemployment insurance.

> **GK:**I will work again if I find a good job. However, I am not looking for a job right now, because I feel tired. I will start again when I feel more energetic.

The reason for her informal work was to earn some extra money while she was staying at home.

> GK: Actually, this is not a big deal. I sew [fancy] pillows, dresses or do alterations for my friends. They bring me the material and the patterns and I sew. This is not a regular business, it is once in a while. I do not make much money out of this, you know...Maybe $100-200 a month. Actually, I usually do not get money from friends, but they now give me anyways, because they know about the financial crisis we are going through. If it were normal times, I would not take any money from the friends. But now we need it, it still helps to buy the children the things they want...

Summary

Babysitters were among the group of informal workers whose service was in high demand. Half of the six babysitters in the sample did this work just to make some pocket money or to pass time. These were the immigrant women in Edmonton whose husbands had well-paying jobs. The other half (the refugee claimants in Montreal), in contrast, worked because of necessity. One of these women was a single mother and the husbands of the other two women worked in marginal jobs.

Babysitting was like piece work, the more children they cared for, the more money they earned. Knowledge of English or French, however, had an impact on the babysitters' informal earnings as well as their working conditions. The ones who did not speak English or French took care of the children of their ethnic people. They worked for long hours for less income. Babysitting did not provide any flexibility in working at home for many of those who worked like this.

Home-based seamstresses' informal work was very irregular when compared to the other kinds of informal work in this sample. These women only worked in order to make extra money once in a while when there was demand from neighbours of friends.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

A close examination of immigrant women's informal jobs shows a mirror image of the formal jobs they occupy in the lower echelons of the labour market. Jenkins and Harding (1989) and Fernandez-Kelly and Garcia (1989) argue that formal and informal jobs are not separate, rather there are different degrees of formality or informality within each occupation. This degree of formality or informality is determined by the presence of government recording and regulation. Their argument is supported by our findings.

The informal jobs considered in this study (i.e., leather apparel work, domestic cleaning, babysitting, hairdressing, and seamstressing) are jobs that can also be done formally. For example, a leather apparel worker can work formally, when she is registered, paying taxes and presumably benefiting from the labour laws. She can also work informally without being registered. In this case she evades taxes and is neither eligible for social security benefits nor protected by labour legislation. A third and equally important alternative is that she can work semi-informally. She is registered, covered by social security benefits, protected by labour laws, but, at the same time, evades labour laws by working overtime and avoids paying taxes for the overtime income. Thus, the same person moves between both kinds of work.

Jenkins and Harding (1989) suggest that formality and informality have to be perceived as opposite ends of a continuum, where government recording and regulation determine the degree of formality or informality. A combination of structural and personal factors push individuals towards the formal or informal ends of the continuum.

While the content of formal and informal jobs are not different, there are still variations in terms of their rewards, benefits, work relations and working conditions. Although informal jobs do not provide any official employment status, employment benefits (i.e., unemployment insurance or pension plan) or job security and usually have arduous working conditions (i.e., irregular and long working hours), they appealed to the immigrant women in this study for various reasons.

7.1.1 Reasons for immigrant women's informal work

In the beginning of this study we asked the questions: Why do immigrant women work informally? Are they pushed into the informal economy because of the barriers they face or are there factors which pull these women into informal work? Throughout this study we tried to show that both structural and individual reasons either push or pull immigrant women into the informal economy.

7.1.1.a Structural factors

Labour market segmentation is the most important factor pushing immigrant women into the informal economy. Immigrant women, especially those women who come from developing countries and speak very little English, are one of the most disadvantaged group of workers in the labour market which is segmented by sex, race and ethnicity (Ng & Estable, 1987; Boyd, 1984; Seward and McDade, 1988; Arnopoulos, 1979). These women have the double disadvantage of being female and immigrant. Sexism or public patriarchy confines them to female type of jobs in the labour markets. Furthermore, racism or ethnic stereotyping places them in a position culturally, linguistically and politically inferior to white women (Benarji, 1987), and allows their reproduction as sources of cheap labour by the demand in socially undesirable and low wage sectors of the economy (i.e., the secondary segment). These women are confined to secondary segment jobs by specific policies and discriminatory practices which are partially justified by their individual characteristics, such as lack of education, knowledge of language, skills and work experience (Phizacklea and Miles, 1980).

The experiences of immigrant women in our sample clearly documents the above mentioned process. Very few of these women had the skills, education, knowledge of language or work experience required for secure and high paying jobs. Even if they had the required education or work experience these were not recognized in Canada. Due to the structural barriers and sexual and ethnic discrimination in the labour market the majority of these women are pushed into jobs in the lower echelons of the labour market with very little or no chance of upward mobility (e.g., in the leather apparel or garment industry, or a mirror factory). Yet others, for these same reasons, preferred staying at home to formally work outside the home.

Already confined to the secondary labour markets, these women are pushed into the informal economy. This is an integral part of the secondary labour markets because of the demand for informal labour. The small, labour intensive firms in the secondary segment which operate with small profit margins, are exposed to intensive competition, vulnerable to economic cycles and with unstable product markets. These conditions generate a demand for informal workers who are docile, easy to hire and fire, and willing to work for long hours.

Apart from the small firms operating on the margins of the secondary segment, individuals in society also create a demand for informal labour. For example, with the increase in women's participation in the paid labour force, more and more working women with families require domestic help and daycare services. Although daycare services are provided by various public and private organizations, these are still insufficient. Besides, many women prefer to hire informal workers because informal workers are more trustworthy as they are frequently recruited by recommendations from friends or acquaintances. They are easily accessible, and the service they provide is usually cheaper and better in quality. Furthermore, the clients do not want to pay unemployment insurance and pension benefits on behalf of the worker.

Discriminatory government policies and practices maintain immigrant women as cheap sources of labour, by denying access to language training, employment programs, or support services that would enable them to qualify for better paying, more secure, unionized jobs (Leah, 1989:171). Furthermore, lax policing of minimum wage and labour standards shows that state agencies tolerate the growth of informalization as a survival mechanism for small firms competing in unstable product markets.

Another structural factor that pushed these immigrant women into the informal economy is the informal networks in the society. In the leather apparel industry, where the majority of the refugee claimants in this study worked, the immigration status of the respondents played a significant role in the level of their exploitation. These women were extremely vulnerable because of the uncertainties of their future. They had to work hard and tolerate all kinds of arduous working conditions without raising their voices. This situation was well utilized by ethnic entrepreneurs. The difficulty of finding good jobs in a labour market segmented by sex and ethnicity created a dependency relationship between these workers and the employers.

7.1.1.b Individual factors

At the individual level, the most common reason for respondents' informal work was economic. The need for 'extra income' or 'more money' was the motive behind almost every woman's choice of informal work. If the main motive was the need for money, we need to question why these women did not work formally. Besides the economic motive, there were several other reasons why immigrant women were attracted to informal work. First, informal work enabled some of these women to work at home. Second, informal work provided them with more income through tax evasion. Third, it gave some of the women the opportunity to work and receive welfare assistance or unemployment insurance benefits at the same time. Finally, informal work provided these women with flexibility in terms of entry and exit to the jobs, arranging one's working hours, and control over productivity and wages.

The individual reasons given by the immigrant women are closely related to the structural factors cited above. When we ask the questions: Why did some immigrant women prefer to work inside the home? Why did these women want to evade taxes and cheat the government by working informally and receiving social security benefits at the same time? Why did they want to have more flexibility? -- we recognize the structural factors lying behind these individual choices.

Immigrant women's decisions to work at home are influenced by a number of individual characteristics: presence and number of pre-school age children, patriarchal ideology (private patriarchy), family income, labour market credentials (e.g., education, skills, knowledge of language, work experience) and immigration status (e.g., refugee claimant).

Among the immigrant women in our sample, eight women (six babysitters and two seamstresses) worked informally at home. Six of these women preferred working at home in order to stay with their pre-school children and fulfil their family responsibilities. Three of the women had never worked outside the home. The other three withdrew temporarily from their work outside the home to stay with their young children.

Vinay (1985) found a strong relationship between the presence of one or more pre-school age children and involvement in the informal economy. According to her, the presence of one pre-school child and the consequent increase in housework, compel the wife-mother to withdraw from the formal labour market, while growing economic needs require her to involve herself in informal activities. Furthermore, when there is more than one pre-school child, the impact of domestic and child-rearing tasks becomes incompatible with the involvement of the wife-mother in the formal labour market. However, still growing economic needs, require her to maintain her informal work, although with a shorter time involvement.

While our study found the presence of pre-school children was a reason for informal work at home, this was not a sufficient condition for withdrawal from work outside the home[9]. Only three out of ten women withdrew from their work outside the home because they had pre-school children. Moreover, some of these women stated that their withdrawal was only temporary until their babies were old enough to leave with a babysitter. Interestingly, these women who preferred working outside the home despite the existence of pre-school children worked in informal jobs. They preferred outside informal work as it provided more income than work inside the home. Moreover, all of these women were refugee claimants. Because of their uncertain future, these women felt compelled to save more money than other women in the sample. Their husbands also had low-skill, low-income and insecure jobs, making these women's contribution to the family income indispensable.

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[9] While Vinay (1985) indicates the effect of the presence of pre-school children on the informal work decisions of the women, she gives the impression that informal work is the work inside the home and formal work is the work outside the home. According to Vinay, when there is one or more pre-school children in the home the women withdraw from the formal work outside the home and work informally at home because of financial necessity. However, informal work is not necessarily the work inside the home. Work inside the home can be formal as well as informal. Similarly, work outside the home can be both formal and informal. Therefore, we distinguish the use of the concepts work inside or outside the home from the concepts formal or informal work.

Husbands' income was an important factor affecting women's decisions to work either inside or outside the home. The immigrant women whose husbands worked in low income, low status jobs with unstable work patterns were more likely to work outside the home. Again, work outside the home, informal work outside the home in particular, provided more income than work inside the home, if it was done on a regular basis.

The majority of the immigrant women who worked at home worked for pocket money. Their income was supplementary to the main household income either earned by the husband or obtained through welfare assistance or unemployment insurance payments. Patriarchal ideology, both in the form of women's subjective perceptions of the gender roles or ideology filtered through their husbands, was an important factor affecting women's decisions to work inside or outside the home. Almost all the immigrant women in the sample had very traditional perceptions of women's role in the family. The majority, even the ones who worked outside the home, perceived housework and childcare as the duty of women.

However, patriarchal ideology (both women's gender role perceptions and ideology filtered through the husband) came to the fore when the husband's occupation was secure and income was sufficient. Otherwise, the family's survival strategy was more important than the implications of patriarchal ideology (Pahl, 1984). Many women whose husbands did not allow them to work in their home country had to work in Canada due to financial necessity. For the women who had to work outside the home, however, patriarchal ideology created a double day. These women worked outside the home during the day and inside the home at nights.

Labour market credentials, such as education, knowledge of English or French, skills and work experience, were also important in affecting both immigrant women's decisions to work inside or outside the home, and their positions in the labour market. Most of the immigrant women with the above characteristics ended up in low paying low-skilled jobs (if they decided to work outside the home). Therefore, some women never attempted to work outside the home as they believed they would only find work in low-paying, low-status jobs. Some of these women said that they preferred staying with their young children at home, because the income they possibly could earn would not be enough to cover the babysitting fees. Family income and immigration status again emerge as factors affecting the work decisions of these women. Not all immigrant women were able to make choices in favour of staying at home. The women who were able to make choices were landed immigrants with husbands working in better income jobs. These women would not work in informal jobs outside the home because of their higher status or class positions relative to the refugee claimants who did informally worked outside the home.

Informal work appealed to the immigrant women who worked in low-status, low-income jobs in the labour market because it provided "tax free" income. The women who had previous formal work experience worked in jobs in the garment industry and other secondary segment jobs (e.g., in a mirror and frame factory, or a quilt factory). There is very little chance of advancement or improvement in working and pay conditions in these types of jobs. For the women who worked in these types of jobs, informal work was a means available to improve the pay conditions, at least, by avoiding the income and social security taxes.

Interestingly, while the wage-employed women in the sample, such as the leather apparel workers and hairdresser, admitted that they were deliberately evading taxes, the majority of the self-employed women (like the babysitters, domestic cleaners and home-based seamstresses) did not consider themselves to be tax evaders. A possible explanation is that wage-employed can be more easily tracked down by the government tax agencies. By contrast, it is harder to track down those who are self-employed. This may give the self-employed women a sense of security which could make them forget the tax evasion side of the issue.

Among the self-employed women there were also those who did not even consider themselves to be working. These were the women who worked on a more irregular basis (i.e., home-based seamstresses and one of the cleaning ladies). Tax evasion was not only a deliberate move to earn more income among the self-employed women, the majority of these women would not have known where to register if they had wanted to. Moreover, they did not know how to keep the necessary books in case they were to register.

Among the immigrant women in this sample, very few received welfare assistance or unemployment insurance while they were working. Those who did were either single mothers or women whose husbands were unemployed. Doing informal work while receiving social benefits was a family survival strategy (Pahl, 1984) for these women because they faced financial hardship.

Informal work also appealed to the majority of the immigrant women as it provided flexibility. First of all, informal jobs did not require any credentials for entry. Contacts play a central role in the informal economy. Friends, neighbours and relatives helped these immigrant women find informal jobs. Contacts were important in the continuity of the informal jobs as well, because contacts meant new jobs or new clients. These contacts were more easily established in ethnic communities.

7.1.2 Informal work experiences

Although informality provided more flexibility to the respondents in gaining entry to jobs, skills, knowledge of language and contacts remained important factors influencing their occupational choices and work experiences. For example, while women who had sewing skills chose jobs related to sewing (e.g., leather apparel work and seamstressing at home), women with no skills either worked as babysitters or domestic cleaners. Within the informal work in the leather apparel industry, availability of skills provided more secure jobs and a comparative advantage over unskilled workers as was the case with seamstresses and lining makers.

Knowledge of language, besides affecting the occupational choices of these women, also affected their work experiences. Women who spoke better English could communicate with the clients and establish better relationships which raised their job satisfaction levels as in the case of EK, the domestic cleaner. It also had a direct effect on their income levels and working conditions. For example, the babysitters who did not speak English could only take care of children from families in their ethnic community. These women worked for lower wages and longer hours. Because their clients were low income parents who could not afford formal daycare, these babysitters would accommodate them by lowering their service fees.

The majority of the informal workers in the sample worked without any job security or employment benefits while a few of them were eligible for employment benefits as they worked semi-informally. All of the women in the sample tolerated the insecure and sometimes arduous working conditions in the informal economy because of the economic and intrinsic rewards this type of work provided and because of very limited alternatives.

The leather apparel workers worked for long hours under difficult working conditions, but they received high piece rates and tax-free (or partially tax-free) incomes. As well, they felt they had control over their production and their wages by working on a piece-rate basis. Piece-work also provided these women with intrinsic rewards. Sewing the whole garment and being able to see the end product provided them with job satisfaction and pride in their job.

The self-employed women (e.g., babysitters, cleaners and seamstresses) also favoured informal work as there was no external control over their work. They felt they were their own bosses. Although informal work gave some of these women the discretion to organize their work hours as well (e.g., home-based seamstresses), for others it provided no flexibility at all. For example, some of the informal babysitters chose this type of home-based work thinking they would be able to combine it with housework. Childcare, however, especially the care of several children, did not leave any time for them to do the housework during the day. On the other hand, informal work still provided these babysitters with the flexibility to choose their clients. Similarly, cleaners chose their clients, too, and if they did not like the client, they simply quit the job.

Like the leather apparel workers, the babysitters and cleaners had control over their wages to some extent. Although they were low-paid, they set the prices themselves in negotiation with the clients and decided how many children they were going to look after or how many houses they are going to clean. Moreover, informal work gave them an opportunity to earn more by increasing work hours or days or the number of children they cared for or houses they cleaned.

The work relationships found within informal wage-employment were different from the ones found within formal wage-employment. For example, in an ethnic family business such as that of the hairdresser, the family members worked for free and without expecting anything except the success of the business. In the leather apparel industry, there was little contact between the informal workers and the employer. Through the organization of the production process (i.e., the use of piece work) employers avoided confrontation with the employees.

7.1.3 Concluding comments

The informal economy is a part of the global economic restructuring which emerged as a response to the economic crises of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Until the 1970s, researchers considered the informal economy as involving the poor only, as long as the mainstream economy remained fairly sound. However, with the onset of the economic crises of the 1970s and 1980s, more and more people found themselves seeking informal work conditions. The informal economy in this era became an integral part of capitalism.

The primary aim of this study has been to explore immigrant women's reasons for informal work and their work experiences. There is very little known about immigrant women's informal work participation and work experiences in Canada. In fact, there are very few studies which explore the work perceptions and work experiences of informal workers in general. By exploring these issues, this thesis aimed to contribute both to a better understanding of informal economy and immigrant women's work in Canada.

The findings of this study suggest that structural factors (e.g., labour market segmentation and the social networks in the society) together with individual factors (e.g., socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, immigration status) push or pull immigrant women into the informal economy. Class, gender, race, and ethnicity influence the labour market positions of immigrant women, thereby affecting their informal work decisions and work experiences.

7.2 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.2.1 Informal economy

Governments are one of the key actors in the growth of the informal economy because it is their policies (e.g., taxation, labour and welfare) that shape the informal economy by defining what is formal and legitimate and what is not (Ferman, Stuart & Hoyman, 1987).

Should governments be more strict in controlling the growth of the informal economy? Should they be more strict in enforcing the taxation and labour laws? These are difficult questions to answer. Many studies in the literature as well as our study found that informal economic activity is a way of supplementing welfare for the poor and disadvantaged. If the government polices the tax evaders these people will find themselves in a worse situation. Ignorance of tax evaders is beneficial for the government as well because heavy policing would more likely to surface the contradictions in society. From this perspective, policing tax evasion might indirectly be an agent of social change while failure to police it might better sustain the status quo (Ferman, Stewart & Hoyman, 1987).

However, if the government does not control the spread of informal economic activity, there will be more insecure jobs in the future. Working conditions could get worse, there will be less employment benefits, and the extent of exploitation will be higher. Thus, governments should enforce labour legislation and increase minimum wage levels. At the same time, governments might be reluctant to enforce the labour laws because, they have to provide support for the small marginal firms in the secondary labour markets. Informality provides the survival of these small firms without the financial aid (i.e., credits) of the government.

A related issue concerns the welfare policy and governments' reliance on informal economies, particularly social economies of mutual aid and care networks (Ferman, Stewart& Hoyman, 1987). Some authors argue that unemployment and the fiscal problems of the state can be absorbed by encouraging more self-help solutions (Gershuny, 1982) as in the case of the daycare services in Canada. Currently, there is more reliance on the informal babysitting arrangements, because informal childcare is used by 80% of children in care (Task Force on Child Care, 1986:154). In most provinces formal daycare arrangements are available for less than 10% of the pre-school population needing alternative care (Task Force on Childcare, 1986). The governments encourage informal babysitting by cutting back on daycare expenses. However, government's transfering its more difficult functions on to the informal economy is very dangerous and it may actually prevent policy reform.

Whether informal economies are useful or not there is fact that adequate policies should adress the existence of this kind of economies.

7.2.2 Language Training Programmes

Knowledge of either of the official languages is one of the most important factors influencing the occupational mobility and adaptation of immigrant women into Canadian society. Lack of language skills steers immigrant women into the low-skill, low-paying, dead-end, insecure and informal jobs.

As we mentioned earlier in this study, language training programmes for immigrants in Canada are officially funded by Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) (Seward and McDade, 1988:20-22). However, there are eligibility criteria to gain access to these programmes. EIC programmes are only offered to those who enter Canada with independent status and show the need to know English or French to get jobs on the labour market. These programmes are basically restricted to immigrants who enter Canada in family or assisted relative status (the majority of the immigrant women enter in this status) and who are not destined for the formal labour market.

In principle, all immigrants, regardless of their immigration and employment status or occupation, should be eligible for language training programmes. These programmes should be more widespread and made more attractive to reach a larger number of immigrant women. The courses could be fully subsidized and childcare would be provided for women with children who want to attend these courses. Working women rarely have access to language training programs unless they are provided at the work place because family responsibilities generally prevent them from attending these courses after work (Leah, 1989:171). Thus lanuage training courses at the work site should be increased.

The language training courses should be more directed towards the use of practical daily English. Another alternative might be for individuals in the community who speak English or French as their first language (i.e., retired or students) to be encouraged to tutor immigrant women voluntarily or in return for some payment which is funded by the government. This would give the immigrant women the opportunity to practice their English or French in daily conversation.

Once the immigrant women improve their English or French, these women may have a better chance of gaining access to other programmes like employment training and skills upgrading provided by Employment and Immigration Canada. These programmes provided by the federal government should also be extended for women staying at home. For example, for women who babysit at home training could supplement them with information on nutrition, first aid, and educational games.

7.3 FUTURE RESEARCH

Our study on informal economy participation of immigrant women in Canada only focuses on the immigrant women working in the secondary labour markets. However, informal work is not an alternative work form for the individuals in the secondary labour market only. Individuals in the primary labour markets are also involved in informal work. For future research it would be interesting to study the informal economy participation of immigrant women working in the primary labour market and compare the reasons for informal work and work experiences of these two groups of immigrant women. Furthermore, this study can be extended in sample size and subsequent studies of different groups of immigrant women in informal work will test the generalizability of our findings.

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APPENDIX A

Name:

I- BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Date of birth:

Country of origin:

Marital Status:

Number of children and ages of children:

Date of arrival to Canada:

Immigration status:

How did you come to Canada?

Occupation:

Approximate monthly income:

Husband's occupation:

Husband's monthly income:

Religion:

II - EDUCATION, SKILLS AND LANGUAGE TRAINING

Number of years of schooling:

Did you take any courses in Canada to improve your skills?

Do you consider attending one?

Ability to speak English:

Did you take any language courses in Canada?

(If yes) Which language training program did you attend?

(If no) Did you ever consider attending one? Why didn't you attend one?

III- INFORMAL WORK

Nature of the work:

Place of work (home-based or else):

Type of employment (self-employed or wage-employed):

The average number of hours worked in a day:

How do you arrange your work hours?

Mode of payment (cash or cheque):

Are you paid on hourly or piece work basis?

How did you decide to work like this?

What are the advantages of working like this?

What are the disadvantages of working like this?

Can you please tell me about your working conditions?

How long are you planning to work in this job?

Don't you ever fear to be caught?

III- FORMAL WORK EXPERIENCE

Have you ever worked in a formal/registered job in Canada?

(If yes) What kind of job/jobs were they?

How did you find that/those jobs?

How long did you work in this/those job(s)?

Why did you quit?

What kind of difficulties you had while working in that/those job(s)?

Have you ever experienced discrimination (ethnic or sexual) when you applied to a job?

Have you ever rejected when you applied to a job?

Have you ever worked (in your home country) before coming to Canada?

(If yes) Where did you work?

IV - DIVISION OF LABOUR IN THE HOUSEHOLD AND PERCEPTION OF THE GENDER ROLES

How do you share the tasks within the household?

What are your responsibilities within the household?

What are your husband's responsibilities?

How do you perceive woman's role in the family?

What do you think about women's work outside the home? Do you think women should work outside the home?

What does your husband think about women working outside the home? Does he allow you to work outside the home?